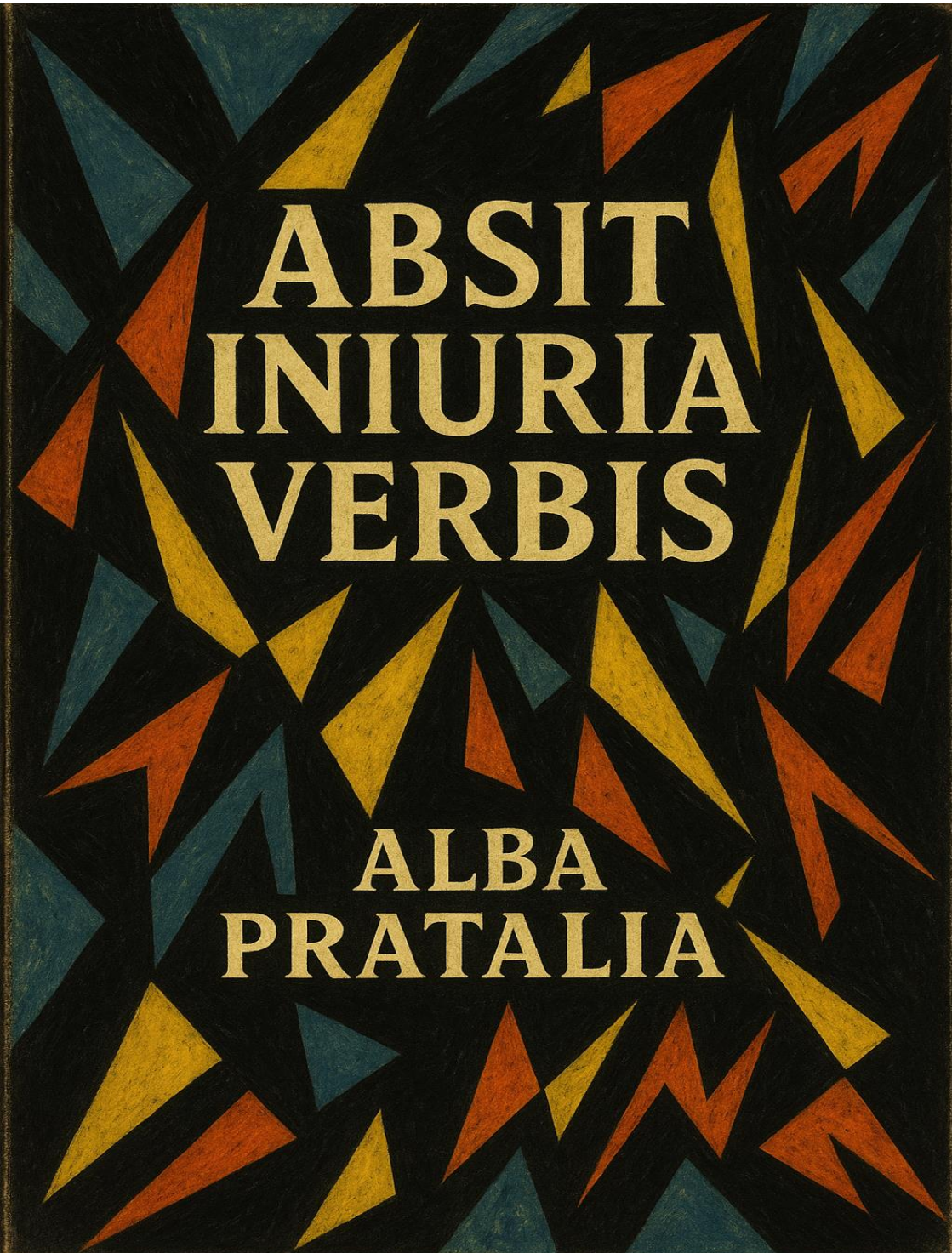
ABSIT
INIURIA
VERBIS
ALBA
PRATALIA

ABSIT INIURIA VERBIS

By Alba Pratalia

INT. BAR – NIGHT

Dim lights. Smoke curling like regrets. A man in his late 40s who looks like he's been through three world wars and a marriage sits hunched over a whiskey glass. He talks without looking up. His voice is gravel soaked in sorrow.

MAN
Living hurts.
I've got a depression so deep my *mind* throbs.
Back's shot. Knees rattle like dice in a God's cruel hand.
And this morning?
My left thumb started wobbling on its own.
Didn't even ask for permission.

BARMAN *(dryly)*
Come on, you're still young.

MAN *(laughs, one note, dead)*
Am I?
It's not the years.

It's the mileage.
Showed someone a photo of me and my wife last week.
They said, "Wow, your daughter's beautiful."
She's a year older than me.
Let that sink in.

Silence. The barman nods once, wordless. Leaves the half-finished bottle in front of the man. Reaches down. Puts a fresh, unopened one beside it.

BARMAN
On the house.

EXT. BAR – DAY

He took the first bottle in his hand, tuck the second under his arm like a child you don't plan to raise, just carry.

Outside, the sunlight stabbed his retinas. He hissed, sunglasses on in a practiced motion. Like a vampire forced into a matinee.

His back screamed. Standing was an act of war. He looked for somewhere to collapse without dramatics. Nothing.

A police officer loitered on the corner. Young. Bored. Gun holster unbuttoned—sloppy.

The man clocked it. Walked over slow. Like his spine was negotiating each step.

No words.

He took the cop's pistol and shot him in the face.

Point-blank.

Red mist on blue uniform.

He kept walking, limping, bottle in one hand, murder in the other.

Uber said: 3 minutes away.

INT. UBER – MOVING – DAY

He slid into the back seat like a sack of rotten meat with somewhere to be. Didn't bother buckling.

Driver said nothing. Just glanced once in the mirror and decided silence was the safer option.

He noticed something on his sleeve. A small, wet lump. Pink and gray. A piece of what used to be belief in law and order.

He peeled it off with two fingers and, with no ceremony, smeared it under the seat like a dried-up booger in a child's classroom.

Then he opened the bottle.

Drank. Deep.

The car turned left onto a quiet boulevard. The engine hummed. Somewhere behind them, sirens began to rise.

He took another sip.

No rush.

The Uber rolled toward the next light.
On the corner: a gang of punks. All piercings, posture, and misdirected testosterone.

He saw them. Nodded like they were an old debt come due.

MAN
You can leave me here.

The driver glanced at the curb, then at him in the mirror. Raised an eyebrow.

DRIVER
Looking for an angry fix?

MAN *(grinning for the first time all day)*
Allen Ginsberg!
I like your style.

He peeled off a ten like it was a Band-Aid from a wound no one cared about.

MAN
Buy yourself a new rearview. You're gonna want it.

He stepped out.
Bottle still in hand, other under arm.
No plan. No spine.
Just rage in a suit.

He walked up like it was Sunday brunch.

MAN
Top of the mornin', gentlemen.
Would any of you happen to be carrying a firearm?

The punks went still. One of them snorted. Another laughed—short, nasal, fake.

PUNK #1
Who the hell are you, old man?

MAN *(sipping from the bottle)*
An archaeologist.
Digging for relics. Preferably loaded ones.

PUNK #2 *(pulls his hoodie tighter)*
You look like a relic yourself.

MAN
Good.
Means I'm worth something.

He took another drink. Let the whiskey sit behind his teeth.
Waited.

Someone was going to make a stupid decision.
He was counting on it.

All of them lifted their shirts or hoodies.
Chrome flashed at their waistlines like party favors at a funeral.

MAN
Oh, splendid!

He grinned like he'd found the Holy Grail in a pawn shop.

MAN
Now—would any of you be so kind as to shoot me through the head?

He pointed to the center of his forehead.
One finger.
Polite. Precise.
Like asking for a light.

The punks looked at each other. Shifted on their feet.

PUNK #3 *(muttering)*
Is this guy for real?

MAN *(still smiling)*
As real as rent. Come on. No hesitation. No half-measures. Right here—*center mass of the soul.*

PUNK #1
You serious, man?

MAN
Deadly.

A long pause.
They stared. He didn't blink.

One of them reached for his gun—slow, unsure.

The man didn't flinch.

Just raised his bottle in a mock-toast.

MAN
Do it before I sober up and change my mind.

The one with the red mohawk and shaking hands pulled the gun.

The others backed slightly—not out of fear, but out of instinct. Like they'd seen this scene before on a low-budget streaming show and didn't want blood on their new sneakers.

Red Mohawk raised the pistol.

The man didn't move.

MAN
Come on.
Free your trigger finger.
Be the instrument of mercy in this opera of shit.

The punk hesitated.

The man leaned closer, forehead practically kissing the barrel.

MAN
You *want* to do it.
I *need* you to do it.
Let's complete each other.

The punk's hand trembled. His finger slid inside the guard, grazing the trigger.

CLICK.

No bullet.

Just a dry metallic fart.

MAN *(without looking surprised)*
Ah. Empty threat. A classic.

Red Mohawk looked at the gun, dumbfounded.
Tried again. Click. Click.

The man sighed. Deep and disappointed, like a father at a school recital.

MAN
You brought a stage prop to an execution.
That's just rude.

He raised the bottle he had in hand and shattered it against the kid's temple.

The punk dropped like bad Wi-Fi.

The others didn't reach for their guns.
They just watched him fall.
One actually took a step back.

The man pointed the broken bottle at the rest.

MAN
Anyone else?
Or should I go buy a rope and do it *your* way?

Silence.

He shook his head. Wiped blood off his knuckles with the punk's hoodie.

MAN
No commitment these days.

He turned and limped away, the other bottle stikk under his arm, dragging his pain and unspent death wish down the street.

INT. DINER – DAY

The bell over the door gave a half-hearted jingle as he stepped in. No one looked up. They never do until it's too late.

He slid into a booth like it owed him rent.

Glass of water with ice arrived without a word.
He drank half.
Then topped it with whiskey from his bottle like it was a refill from home.

The waitress turned, noticed. She was maybe 30, tired at 22, survived by routine and coffee.

WAITRESS
Hey. You can't do that.

He didn't respond. Just looked at her like she was furniture that suddenly learned English.

Then slowly reached into his coat.

Pulled out a foldable hunting knife.

Unfolded it.

She froze, caught between protocol and dread.

He moved like he was spreading butter.

One clean slice across the inside of her thigh.

She gasped—a sharp intake—and crumpled.

Blood sprayed the tiles like cheap marinara.
She thrashed once, then quieted. A puddle forming beneath her, wide and red and permanent.

The man took another sip of his drink. Set the glass down gently.

MAN
You were right.
I *can't*.
But I did.

Then he sat back, calmly, like he was waiting for a menu.

He leaned back in the booth, glass in hand, ice clinking softly like polite applause.

The waitress lay still now, a growing halo of red soaking into the checkered floor. Someone screamed—belated, hysterical, off-key.

Another dropped their fork.

A man got up, half-rising, half-deciding whether he wanted to be a hero or stay alive. He chose the latter. Sat back down. Shaking.

The cook peeked out from behind the stainless-steel pass with a spatula like it was a weapon.

COOK
Jesus Christ.

The man sipped his whiskey.

No rush.
No guilt.
Just hydration.

Outside, a customer fled, phone to her ear. He watched her run through the window like he was watching a bird take off.

Police would come.
Paramedics too, though not for her.

Reporters, maybe.
He'd already killed time, now he was just waiting for time to notice.

He wiped condensation off the glass with his sleeve, looked around.

MAN
No pie?

No one answered.

The silence was now a living thing. Thick.
Breathing. Terrified.

He rose from his booth with the deliberate grace of a man who knows nobody's going to stop him.

Took the bottle. Took the glass.

Crossed the diner, stepping over a purse abandoned mid-scream.

A booth near the window. Plate untouched.
Steam still rising from the coffee.
A half-smoked cigarette still smoldering in the ashtray.
A life interrupted by common sense.

He sat.

Took a sip of her coffee. Bitter. Lifeless. Corporate. Like everything else in America.

Then he stared at the plate. Two fried eggs—hard as rubber dog shit.

MAN
Who kills eggs this way?

He shook his head.

MAN *(quietly)*
Heathens.

He picked up the blood-slicked hunting knife—didn't bother wiping it.

Cut into the sausage. Steam escaped like a secret.

He chewed slowly. Thoughtfully.

MAN
Huh.

A nod.

MAN
Surprisingly good… for a place where people scream louder than the bacon sizzles.

Another sip of whiskey. A bite of toast.

Outside, sirens began to howl.

Inside, he added a little hot sauce. Calm as church.

He sliced the sausages between two slices of toast. Poured the hot sauce with the care of a man constructing a fragile truce.

A sandwich.
No grandeur.
Just meat, sauce, bread, and the rhythm of his teeth.

He ate it slow, like he had nowhere to be.

Another sip of whiskey.
Another sip of coffee.
The silence around him was a blanket, getting heavier.

His eyes flicked to the clock on the wall. Tick. Tock.

He finished the sandwich. Took his time. Wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, like he'd just devoured a five-star meal at a Michelin restaurant, not a greasy diner in the middle of nowhere.

He stood, still not bothering to acknowledge the human wreckage in the room. His eyes swept over the now-awkward scene.

The waitress was dead.
A man was still frozen, mouth open, in the corner.
Another customer was on the phone with 911.

He reached for the coffee, still warm.

Then, casually, he passed the kitchen.

MAN *(under his breath)*
Let's make it interesting.

He picked up a pitcher of water from the counter and tossed it into the skillet on the fire sizzling with bacon. A ball of fire, the shockwave of fire hit the room like an explosion.

The cook jumped back, hands up in defense.

COOK
What the hell—!?

The man didn't reply. Just finished the coffee and walked out.

EXT. DINER – DAY

He stepped outside, coffee cup in hand, steam still trailing from his coat like an afterthought.
The sun was too bright, again. Always was.
He slipped the sunglasses back on.

Behind him, the diner was fire and chaos: someone yelling about the waitress, someone else trying to tame the fire, a cook screaming, *"He poured water on the bacon! Jesus Christ!"*

Sirens howled closer now. Real ones. Not metaphor. Not memory.

He walked toward the corner like he had a dental appointment with Death. No hurry.

Drank the rest of the coffee. Tossed the empty cup into a bin already overflowing with fast food and used masks.

At the next intersection, a little girl on a pink scooter stared at him. Big eyes. No fear. Just curiosity.

He nodded politely.

MAN
Stay in school.

She blinked.

He crossed the street.

At the bus stop, a man in a suit was scrolling through his phone, oblivious to the blood-spattered coat beside him.

The man sat down next to him, took out the nearly-empty bottle of whiskey, and offered it.

MAN
Want a sip before it all burns down?

The suit didn't look up.

SUIT
No thanks. I'm clean now.

MAN *(smiling)*
I'm not.

He drank the last of it.
Dropped the empty on the pavement like a truth no one needed.

Down the street, cop cars screeched to a halt in front of the diner. Boots hit pavement.
Shouts. Movement.

The man exhaled. Looked to the sky. No answers there.

He stood.

MAN
Alright.

EXT. BUS STOP – DAY

He stood there, swaying slightly, the whiskey finally catching up.

The sirens were louder now, but distant again. Like they weren't chasing him anymore—just echoing, like trauma.

The man glanced at the suit, then out loud, to no one in particular:

MAN
My mum used to beat me with a coat hanger.
You know, the metal wire ones. The ones you can untwist into bad decisions.
You know why she stopped?

The suit didn't look up. Barely mumbled.

SUIT
What?

MAN
My mum used to beat me with a coat hanger.

You know, the metal wire ones.
You know why she stopped?

SUIT *(dead-eyed)*
Dunno.

A pause. A little girl had wandered closer, same pink scooter, now nibbling a candy stick, watching him like he was TV.

She answered.

GIRL
Because eventually you were born.

Silence.

The man blinked.
Laughed once. A single bark, straight from the grave.

MAN
Smart kid.

She shrugged.

GIRL
My mum hits me with a sandal. It's called a *chancleta*.

MAN *(nods)*
Cultural heritage.

EXT. BUS STOP – DAY

The air hung heavy, like the whole city was holding its breath.

Without warning—no flare-up, no drama—just muscle memory and alcohol reflex—

The man turned to the suit and, with one smooth, almost tender motion, sliced off the man's ear.

A wet *schlick* followed by a shriek.

The suit dropped his phone. Hands to the side of his head, screaming like he'd just been introduced to the real world for the first time.

Blood streamed. Pooled on the screen of his unlocked app.

The man, calm as ever, held the ear between thumb and forefinger. Like it was sushi.

Turned to the girl on the pink scooter.

MAN
You want?

The girl didn't flinch. Just stared.

Then took another bite of her candy stick.

GIRL
Nah. I'm vegan.

The man smiled, proud.

MAN
Smart *and* moral.

He tossed the ear into a nearby trash bin like it was yesterday's ethics.

Behind them, more sirens. Footsteps. Yelling.

Still, he stood there. Knife in one hand, empty whiskey bottle in the other.

Like a man waiting for the curtain to drop.

The girl looked at him. Chewed her candy like it was made of judgment.

GIRL
You a pedo?

The man snorted. Wiped the blade on his coat.

MAN
You wish.

She rolled her eyes. Did a little mocking dance on the scooter, circling him once.

GIRL
Gne gne gne.
Come with me then.

She kicked the bottle with her foot. It clinked, hollow.

GIRL
Leave the bottle, smarty pants. It's empty.

He looked down at it like he hadn't noticed.

MAN
So am I.

She started wheeling off without him.

GIRL
Cool. Then we match. Come on.

He glanced back. The suit was still moaning, cupping the space where his ear used to live. Sirens were close again, too close.

The man shrugged. Dropped the bottle.

It rolled lazily into the gutter.

He followed the girl down the sidewalk, limping, knife back in his coat, sunglasses still on, as if this were just another Tuesday and she was his parole officer.

EXT. CITY BACKSTREETS – LATER

They walked. She scooted.
He limped like every step owed him money.
She led like she was late for recess in hell.

They passed a graffitied wall with a half-finished mural of a saint vomiting flowers.
She stopped and pointed at it.

GIRL
That one's supposed to be my mom.

MAN *(dry)*
Saint of what?

GIRL
Overdosing and burning the rice.
She was really bad at both.

He nodded. What else could he do?

They turned a corner into a cul-de-sac of broken swings and plastic detritus.
An abandoned playground. Rust. Rot.
The ghosts of laughter long since evicted.

She hopped off the scooter and kicked a seesaw.

GIRL
Here we are.

MAN
Is this where you stab me and take my coat?

GIRL *(shrugs)*
I'm not that ambitious.

She sat on the swing. Started moving lazily, back and forth, her toes carving patterns in the dust.

GIRL
You ever kill a priest?

MAN
Only metaphorically.

GIRL
You should. They taste like communion wafers and shame.

He sat on the other swing. It groaned under his weight, like the universe disapproved.

They swayed in silence for a while. Just two lost creatures in a sandbox designed for people who believed in tomorrow

The man swung gently, like a grandfather clock on its last swing.

MAN
Is there a church nearby?

She didn't answer right away. Just dragged her feet to slow the swing, chewing her candy like she was thinking about algebra, or explosives.

GIRL
Yeah. One block over. Saint Mary of the Perpetual Letdown.

She pointed with her chin.

GIRL
They lock the doors now, ever since Father Greg got caught baptizing his own guilt in altar wine.

MAN
Glass windows?

GIRL
Stained. Real pretty. One's got Saint Michael stabbing the devil. Looks like fan art.

He stood. Cracked his back. Groaned like a haunted door.

MAN
I've got one match left and a belly full of regret.

GIRL
Sounds like church clothes to me.

He reached into his coat. Pulled out a crumpled paper from the diner. Ketchup stain, maybe blood. Either worked.

MAN
Wanna make a confession?

GIRL
Only if we light something after.

They walked toward the street again.

One man. One girl.
Swing set still rocking behind them like it missed them already.

INT. CHURCH – DUSK

They push open the heavy doors. The air inside is stale, perfumed with incense and dust.
The candles flicker like they're trying to warn someone.

Empty pews.
Stained glass bleeds colored light onto the cracked floor.
Jesus watches, nailed and bored.

The girl walks ahead. Innocent as a loaded gun.

GIRL
I wanna confess.

From the side sacristy, **Father Greg** emerges.
Late 40s, rosary around his wrist like a restraining

order from heaven.
He smiles. Greasy. Practiced.

FATHER GREG
Of course, my child. Come.

She nods. Follows.
They step into the confessional booth. Two doors. Two sinners.

Father Greg slides into his side. Pulls the screen open.

But it's not her.

It's **him**.

In the priest's box. Silent. Still.

Father Greg starts to speak—

FATHER GREG
My so—

Too late.

The knife is already across his throat before the sentence finishes its sin.

One clean, horizontal cut.
Trachea. Artery. Esophagus.
The holy trinity of silence.

Greg makes a sound like a dying flute. His eyes go wide, confused.
Like God had just unfriended him.

He slumps forward, rosary falling from his wrist into a puddle that isn't holy water.

The man wipes the blade on the purple confessional curtain. Stands.

From the other side of the booth, the girl calls out.

GIRL
Bless me, Father, for I have fun.

Beautiful. Homicidal mentorship wrapped in fatherly delegation. Here's the scene, lit like divine vengeance through a Molotov bottle:

INT. CHURCH – CONTINUOUS

Father Greg is now a collapsed prophecy at the base of the confessional.

The man steps out, knife cleaned, purpose still filthy.
The girl stands near the altar, fingering the holy water like a bored pianist.

He joins her. Looks up at the domed ceiling. Angels painted centuries ago.
So smug. So untouched.

MAN
Let's set this place on fire.

He hands her the metaphor and the moment.

MAN
I give you the lead.
Any idea?

She thinks. Licks the last of her candy stick, now sharp like a prison shiv.

GIRL
We stack the hymnals in a circle.
Like a bonfire. But Catholic.

She grabs a bundle from the pews.
Tears out pages mid-verse.

GIRL
Then we take those red votive candles, line ‘em up like a runway.
When it lights, it sings.

She stops. Looks at him.

GIRL
You got lighter fluid?

MAN *(checks coat)*
I've got lighter.
And I leak despair. Close enough?

She grins. He nods. Partnership sealed.

Together, they begin.
Tearing pages.
Stacking hymnals.
Lighting candles.

The organ looms in the shadows, untouched.
A relic of noise.

The man looks at it.

MAN
You play?

GIRL
Like the devil's barista.

INT. CHURCH – MINUTES LATER

The hymnals are stacked like a pagan altar. Pages torn. Candles flickering along the aisle, red light pulsing like a heartbeat about to stop.

The girl climbs onto the organ bench. Cracks her knuckles.

GIRL
Let's give God one last concert.

She slams the keys.

A violent, discordant chord floods the nave. Then she shifts—starts pounding out something half-Bach, half-dementia. A frenzied fugue with too much joy and not enough mercy.

The man stands before the altar, soaking the book pile with wine from the communion bottles.

MAN *(to himself)*
Blood of Christ, meet actual fire.

He flicks the lighter.
Pauses.
Smiles like he's found peace in arson.
Lights the base of the pile.

The flame catches with a whisper—then roars.

The stained glass flickers in the growing heat. Saint Michael looks like he's sweating. Virgin Mary begins to cry red.

The girl keeps playing.
Louder. Faster.

She's grinning now. Pure chaos.
Smoke starts creeping up the walls.
The organ wheezes like it's in pain.

GIRL
Is it a sin to be better at destruction than prayer?

MAN
Only if you ask the wrong priest.

They laugh. Together. Real. Brief.

The crucifix above the altar cracks in the heat.
Christ finally lets go.

Crashes down.

The man opens the front doors wide.
Lets the smoke out.
Lets the fire breathe.

He turns back, offers the girl his hand.

MAN
Time to go.
We just unbaptized a building.

She hops off the bench, candy stick now just a melted curve in her fingers.

GIRL
You think they'll rebuild it?

MAN
They always do.
That's what makes it worth burning.

Together, they step out into the evening light, fire behind them, shadows stretching long and blasphemous.

EXT. HILL – UNDER A TREE – DAY

The church behind them is an inferno. Not just burning—*collapsing*.
Stained glass explodes like firework confession.
The bell tower groans and bends, then crashes with a sound like the end of a belief system.

They sit under a crooked tree. Far enough not to feel the heat.
Close enough to feel the power.

The man lights a cigarette with the same hand he used to kill a priest.

MAN
I'm fascinated by the impunity.

GIRL *(licking soot off her thumb)*
Hm?

MAN
Since I walked out of the bar…

GIRL
It's not even noon and you *walked out* of a bar?

He points at himself with both index fingers.
Cigarette wobbles in his mouth.

MAN
Duh-ha.

GIRL *(shrugs)*
Fair enough.

MAN
Since I walked out of the bar, I've killed three people.

Banged one on the head.
Set a diner on fire.
Burned down a church.
And now?

He gestures around them.

MAN
I'm sitting on a bench. Under a tree. Talking with you.

She looks at him, deadpan.

GIRL
Life's fair like that. If you're white, male, and look tired enough.

He chuckles. A laugh like something was finally released.

MAN
You know what I regret?

GIRL
Let me guess. Nothing?

MAN *(shakes head)*
I should've taken the pie.

She nods.

GIRL
That's valid.

Behind them, the cross at the top of the church snaps and crashes to the ground, still flaming.

They don't flinch.

She kicks her legs out lazily, sitting sideways on the bench, watching the church buckle into hell.

Then—mockingly, half-sung, half-sarcastic—she starts:

GIRL *(singing)*
♫ *The best is yet to come…*

Come the day you're mine
Come the day you're mine…
I'm gonna teach you to fly— ♫

She suddenly yells, over-the-top:

GIRL
I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN THE PIE!

He snorts, almost chokes on his cigarette.

She keeps going, now full lounge-act from a post-apocalyptic cabaret:

GIRL *(swaying her arms dramatically)*
♫ *We're gonna drain the cup dry—*
Wait till your charms are right…
For these arms to surround— ♫

She finishes the verse, leans back theatrically, then deadpans:

GIRL
If anyone asks, that was my audition for hell's talent show.

He exhales smoke and misery, grinning.

MAN
You're in.

She takes a bow from the bench.

GIRL
Obviously.

The wind shifts. A soft breeze carries a bit of ash, like papal confetti.

They sit in silence again, the kind that isn't empty—just shared.

EXT. HILL – UNDER THE TREE – MOMENTS LATER

The girl is still humming the last note, soft and deranged.

Then—

WEEEE-OOOO WEEEE-OOOO WEEEE-OOOO.

Here they come.
Two fire engines. A screeching ambulance.
A police cruiser fishtails into the church parking lot like it just remembered it's supposed to uphold order.

Firefighters spill out, shouting, uncoiling hoses, scrambling.
Too late. They're spraying God's ashes.

A paramedic runs up and just stops, staring at what used to be a roof.
A cop leans out of the car, mouth open, chewing a pen that's clearly lost the will to write.

The man and the girl sit beneath their tree, invisible in plain sight.

She points with her chin.

GIRL
Ah. Authority.

MAN
Better late than… competent.

GIRL
Think they'll check under the tree?

MAN
They're not here to solve.
They're here to report.

She watches one of the firefighters trip on a loose hose.

GIRL
They gonna find the priest?

MAN
Only if he starts knocking from inside the confession booth.

GIRL *(mock-prayer)*
Saint Greg of the Slashed Throat, patron of poorly kept secrets.

They both laugh—quietly, reverently.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT – CHAOS

Firemen are shouting, hoses spraying the skeletal remains of Saint Mary of the Perpetual Letdown. Paramedics mill around pretending they're waiting for something alive to emerge.
Smoke curls skyward like incense offered to a god who stopped answering.

The man and the girl stroll right into the center of it all.
Calm. Confident. Covered in ash and the scent of blasphemy.

They walk up to the nearest cop—mid-30s, shaved head, overconfident gait, chewing a stick of gum like it owes him rent.

The man gently taps him on the shoulder.

MAN
Good morning, fine officer.

Cop turns.

MAN *(gesturing politely to himself and the girl)*
It was us who set the church on fire.

The cop blinks. Looks at them. Looks back at the fire.

COP
What? Sir, please… this is not the time.

GIRL
But it's true. He also killed the priest. Slit his throat like a communion ham.

COP *(kneeling to her level, patronizing)*
Sweetheart, this is an official emergency.
Why don't you take your grandpa and go play somewhere else, huh?

The man goes rigid. Offended not by the accusation, but by the *label*.

MAN
Grandpa? *Grandpa*?

He takes a step closer, all dignity and murder in his posture.

MAN
How *dare* you. Do I look like the type who owns slippers and votes for stability?

COP *(frowns, distracted)*
Sir, look, we're trying to secure the area—

MAN
You are failing with admirable consistency.

GIRL
We really did it though. We're not being *cute*. We *burned a church* and murdered a priest.
He bled like cheap wine.

COP *(waves them off)*
Look, I'm not in the mood. If this is TikTok bullshit, save it for your therapist.

He turns away to yell at a fireman.

The girl sighs.

GIRL
See? You try to be honest in this world and no one cares.

MAN
That's why we lie. It gets better service.

They watch for a moment as firefighters try to pull the melting bell from the rubble.

GIRL *(after a beat)*
Let's steal something and leave.

MAN
I like your worldview.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT – CONTINUOUS

An **ambulance** idles like an afterthought. Doors open. Lights off. Engine humming in neutral, like it's asleep on the job.

The man and the girl stop beside it.
Look at the open doors.
Look at each other.

Shrug. Simultaneously. Synchronized crime.

MAN
Can you reach the pedals?

GIRL *(snorts)*
Do I look like I can reach the pedals?

MAN
Fair.
Alright. You get the siren, then.

She nods, climbs in like it's a playground. He takes the driver's seat, adjusts it back for his murder-worn

spine.
Slams the door. Puts it in gear.

She finds the control panel.

GIRL *(gleeful)*
Oh, we are about to ruin traffic for *everyone*.

She slaps the **siren button**.

WEEE-OOO-WEEE-OOO
Immediate chaos. Lights on. Sound up. Bystanders jump. A firefighter drops his helmet.

The ambulance pulls out of the lot like a divine mistake on wheels.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – MOVING

They're flying down city streets now.
Cars parting like Moses had a grudge.
The siren wails like an opera singer on fire.

MAN *(yelling over the noise)*
How old are you, anyway?

GIRL *(yelling back)*
In which jurisdiction?

He cackles. Slaps the wheel.

MAN
I knew I liked you for a reason.

GIRL
Also, I'm technically not allowed to cross state lines with you. But fuck it.

MAN
Same.

They roar past a crosswalk. A priest holding a Bible looks up. Drops it.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – STILL MOVING

They blast through a red light. The siren's howling. Wind howling. The world outside blurs like it's trying to forget them.

The man grips the wheel with one hand, the other lighting another cigarette off the dashboard lighter.

MAN
Anyway, kid—
a number, not a punchline.
Age. Now.

She's still fiddling with the siren settings. Makes it wail like a tortured theremin for fun. Then looks at him, serious for the first time.

GIRL
Eleven.

Beat.

MAN *(blinks)*
Eleven?

GIRL
Yeah. Why?

MAN
You talk like a 40-year-old divorce lawyer who smokes menthols and keeps a bottle of gin in a teddy bear.

GIRL
I had a complicated infancy.

She pauses.

GIRL
How old are *you*, exactly?

MAN *(shrugs)*
Hard to say.
My joints say 92.
My liver says *autopsy*.
But I guess… forty-seven.

GIRL
You guess?

MAN
I stopped counting after I realized birthdays were just reminders no one bought you anything useful.

She thinks about that.

GIRL
I got pepper spray once. From a foster mom. It was half-empty.

MAN
That's love.

They exchange a quick glance, both stone-faced.

Then she hits the *PA system* button on the dashboard.

GIRL *(into the mic)*
Attention citizens: we are *not* paramedics.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – CONTINUOUS

The city blurs by.
Siren still wailing.
Wind whips through the cracked window.

She's got her feet on the dashboard like this is a
Sunday drive and not a felony with a soundtrack.

He eyes her sideways between drags.

MAN
You wouldn't happen to have an overage sister?

GIRL *(instantly)*
Dude. Gross.

MAN
Hey. A man has needs.

GIRL
Yes. And you need *help*.
And a *casket*.

MAN *(nods)*
Yeah.
More the latter.

She adjusts the rearview mirror to look at herself.

GIRL
You ever think maybe the reason you're lonely is that you hit on the sisters of eleven-year-olds?

MAN
Counterpoint: you're the only eleven-year-old I talk to.
And I never hit on anyone younger than my neurosis.

GIRL
So like... thirty-five?

MAN
Exactly. Thirty-five, bitter, and ideally divorced.

GIRL
That's your dating app bio right there.

He taps the steering wheel like it's sending out Morse code.

MAN
You think they'd let me make a profile from inside a stolen ambulance?

GIRL
They let people do yoga in prison, so... yeah.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – DOWNHILL – CONTINUOUS

The hill stretches ahead—steep, winding, merciless.
Speedometer ticks past 85 MPH.
The siren wails like it's panicking on their behalf.

The man stares forward, dead-eyed.

Then, calmly, as if deciding not to water the plants—

MAN
What's the point anyway?

He lets go of the wheel. Just takes his hands off.
Like surrender in a Western.

The ambulance lurches.
Starts veering.

GIRL
WHAT THE HELL?!

MAN *(shrugging)*
Mortality. Decay. Loneliness.
Nothing good lasts.
Might as well let the laws of physics finish the story.

The girl throws her candy stick at him—it bounces off his shoulder.

GIRL
Jesus Christ, drive!

MAN
He's not taking the wheel either.

They swerve past a minivan. Horns blare.

She scrambles across the console, grabs the wheel with both hands.
She's too short—knees on the seat, face twisted in panic.

GIRL
You're gonna kill us!

MAN *(lights another cigarette)*
I thought that was kind of the point.

She wrestles the wheel straight, breathing heavy.

GIRL
No. No, no, no.
If anyone kills me, it's gonna be me.
Or *maybe* a vending machine falling on me in a Walmart.
Not you, you emo fossil.

He looks at her, finally cracks a smile.

MAN
You care if we crash?

GIRL
Only if I don't get to say something clever before we do.

Beat. They steady. The road levels out. The engine growls.

She drops back into her seat, fuming.

GIRL
Next time you wanna give up on life, wait until *I'm not in the vehicle*.

MAN
Fair point.

GIRL
Ass.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – CONTINUOUS

The road has leveled out some, but they're still barreling forward at 65 MPH, wind punching the windows, the siren now off, mercifully.

The man stretches his arms theatrically.

MAN
Alright.
You drive then, if you want to survive.

GIRL *(deadpan)*
I can't reach.

MAN
Sounds like a *you* problem now.

Without ceremony, he scoots over to the passenger seat. Lights a cigarette like he just retired from life. Puts his feet up on the dash.

She crawls behind the wheel, fuming.

GIRL
You're out of your mind.

MAN
Out, lost, repossessed—whatever the term is.

She strains her leg toward the gas pedal. Can't make it. Leans so far forward her chin nearly hits the horn.

GIRL
I'm driving with my *toes* right now.

MAN
That's better than most Uber drivers.

The ambulance swerves slightly. They take out a mailbox. She jerks it back into lane, barely.

GIRL
What happens if we crash?

MAN *(exhales)*
Then it's your turn to be the corpse and mine to be the punchline.

GIRL
Deal.

Another swerve.

A cat on the sidewalk darts for cover. Somewhere, a crossing guard drops her sign and prays.

GIRL *(gritting teeth)*
Next stop, we're getting blocks so I can reach the pedals like a *civilized* delinquent.

MAN
Or we install hand controls.
Grandma-style.

She growls.

GIRL
I *hate* you.

MAN
That's the healthiest reaction anyone's had to me in years.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – CONTINUOUS

She's hunched over the wheel, legs half-folded, one foot wedged somewhere near the gas, the other

flailing uselessly in the direction of the brake.
Every correction is a near-death experience.
The horn blares intermittently—not from her pressing it, but from panic radiating through the chassis.

The man, meanwhile, is lounging in the passenger seat like it's a deck chair on the Titanic.

He flips open the glove box, finds the radio panel.
Starts cycling stations like he's browsing sins.

MAN
We need some roadtrip music.

GIRL
We need a mortician. And a goddamn seat booster.

She jerks the wheel again—*another mailbox grazed, maybe a child's trampoline flattened*. The ambulance fishtails briefly before realigning.

He doesn't react.

Then he finds it.

♫ *Sweet Home Alabama* kicks in, clear as a death bell.

MAN *(grins)*
Now we're talking.

He leans his elbow out the window, lets the wind steal the cigarette smoke.

GIRL *(struggling)*
I swear to Satan, if I die to Lynyrd Skynyrd, I'm haunting you.

MAN
Just be glad it's not "Don't Stop Believin'."

He starts nodding along to the beat, tapping his foot on the dash.

GIRL
I'm too young to die and too short to steer.

MAN
And yet somehow, you're still the best driver I've had all week.

They blow past a billboard for *"Heaven's Gate Assisted Living – Where Faith Meets Diapers"*. The sign snaps in half from the windburst.

The guitar solo kicks in.
They keep driving. Into fire. Into fate. Into whatever the hell this is.

Oh yes—domesticity meets derangement. Cleaning a murder weapon in a stolen emergency vehicle to the sound of *Sweet Home Alabama*. Let's write it like it's the most natural thing in the world.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – CONTINUOUS

The wheels still roar. The radio blasts on:

♫ *Big wheels keep on turnin'…* ♫

The man leans forward, opens the small sliding window between the cab and the rear of the ambulance.

He half-dives in—his back end flailing, feet kicking the dashboard, cigarette ash snowing onto the console.

GIRL *(not looking at him)*
Dude.
Too much mooning.

MAN *(grunting)*
Eyes on the road, kiddo.
Or on your obituary. Dealer's choice.

She flicks on the wipers. For no reason. Just out of spite.

He disappears into the back for a moment.
Rummaging. Clattering.
The sound of drawers opening, plastic containers shifting, something metal falling.

Then he emerges again—crawling back through the window, one hand holding **a wad of cotton balls** and a **brown bottle of hydrogen peroxide** like it's just a normal Tuesday and not a war crime in motion.

He sits back down, sighs like a tired surgeon.

Takes out the blooded folding knife.
Unsnaps it.

Starts cleaning it. Methodically. Carefully.
Cotton. Peroxide. Wipe. Repeat.

GIRL *(steering wildly)*
You cleaning that like it's going back on the shelf at Bed Bath & Beyond.

MAN
It's called respect for tools.

He flicks off a flake of dried blood.

MAN
You never know when you'll need to open a priest again.

GIRL *(dry)*
Nice.
You gonna put it in a shadow box next?

MAN
Only if we survive the next twenty minutes.

She hits the horn again—this time on purpose.
Flips off a driver they just cut off.

GIRL
We're making memories.

MAN *(smiling)*
Family road trip. Hallmark can eat their heart out.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – STILL MOVING – DAY

The road winds ahead. A bit of countryside now. The girl wrestles the wheel, half-standing on the seat, breathing like a squirrel in a microwave.

The man is still lovingly swabbing the last traces of priest off his knife, then reaches into a tray beside him.

Pulls out a **blood-drawing needle**—long, glinting, cruelly medical.

He dangles it in front of him, inspecting it like a jeweler would a sapphire.

MAN
Do you like needles?

GIRL *(immediately, without pause)*
Dude, I'm *eleven.*
That's literally my biggest fear.

MAN
Oh.

He turns the needle slowly, lets the light catch it. Holds it up, just above the dash.

MAN
You're not gonna like what I have here, then.

He turns slightly, showing it to her.

She glances—just one glimpse—and SHRIEKS.

GIRL
AAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!

She *lets go* of the wheel, flattens herself against the passenger door, arms up like she's being arrested by Satan.

GIRL
PUT IT AWAY PUT IT AWAY PUT IT AWAAAAAY!!!

The ambulance swerves like a drunk elephant on rollerblades.

Horn blares. Tires screech. Mailbox #6 dies.

MAN *(calmly)*
This is an overreaction.

GIRL
OVERREACTION?! IT'S A *NEEDLE*, YOU *PSYCHOPATH!*

The vehicle veers into the opposite lane. Oncoming traffic honks. A family station wagon swerves into a ditch.

She screams again, tries to crawl out the window.

Still, under *no circumstance* does the man reach for the wheel.
Not even a twitch. He's watching the chaos like it's a mildly interesting animal documentary.

MAN *(holding the needle still)*
It's unused.

GIRL *(hyperventilating)*
I WILL STAB YOU WITH YOUR CLEAN KNIFE IF YOU DON'T PUT THAT THING BACK IN HELL.

He finally, *slowly*, slides the needle back into the tray.

MAN
You know, we should explore this in therapy.

She punches the horn. It honks twice.

She dives back to the wheel, barely missing a roadside hot dog stand.

GIRL
You're driving next.

MAN
No I'm not.

GIRL
I swear to God I will start menstruating just to guilt you into it.

MAN
That's impressive. Weaponized puberty.

GIRL
TAKE THE WHEEL, GRANDPA!

MAN
Hard pass.

They keep barreling forward. Speed: 70. Steering: abstract concept. Needle: safely back in its evil drawer.

Absolutely. Let’s crash through another layer of absurdity. Enter: the birthday party no one invited them to. Except fate.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET – MOMENTS LATER

The ambulance rockets through a residential area now.
Inflatable castles on front lawns.
Balloons tied to mailboxes.
Lawn chairs, parents with plastic cups, a tragically optimistic magician twisting balloon animals that look like failed metaphors.

Banner over one house reads:
"Happy 6th Birthday, Dakota!!!"

Kids everywhere. Screaming, sticky, sugar-drunk.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – MOVING

GIRL *(still rattled)*
Okay. We're calming down now. We're breathing. We're regaining control.

MAN
I'm very proud of you.

GIRL
Don't patronize me or I'll ram this into a—

Then she sees it.

GIRL
…Nope. Nope nope NOPE—

MAN
What now?

She points out the windshield.

A **clown** steps into the road.
Full makeup. Red nose. Giant shoes. Holding a cupcake.
Unaware. Smiling.
Dead in the headlights.

GIRL
THAT IS A CLOWN AND I REFUSE TO YIELD.

She *honks*—too late.

The clown turns, sees them, drops the cupcake.
Time freezes.

The ambulance clips the edge of the bouncy castle and goes airborne—just for a second.
Balloons explode.
A table of gift bags is obliterated.
One dad dives into a hedge with a juice box.

INT. STOLEN AMBULANCE – AIRBORNE

MAN *(unfazed)*
I think Dakota's gonna remember this birthday.

They land—*THUD*.
Bounce once.
Skid to a halt on someone's perfectly manicured lawn.

Everything's still. Siren wailing softly, like it's confused.

EXT. LAWN – CONTINUOUS

A stunned silence from the party.

Children gape. Parents fumble for phones. The clown sits in the middle of the street, cross-legged, face smeared, tears forming.

A kid shouts:

KID
THAT WAS AWESOME!!!

And the crowd erupts in applause.

INT. AMBULANCE – STILL

The girl turns to him, eyes wide, both hands still clutching the wheel.

GIRL
Did we just… crash a party?

MAN
Technically, we *drove through* one.

GIRL
Did we kill anyone?

MAN
Only the vibe.

She exhales.

GIRL
We should steal some cake and leave.

MAN
I like the way you think.

EXT. FRONT LAWN – CONTINUOUS

They push open the doors of the ambulance. It hisses, groans, leaks something that should definitely not be leaking.

The girl hops down, brushing icing off her sleeve. The man follows, lazily adjusting his coat, knife back in pocket, cigarette somehow still lit.

They step around the rear of the ambulance—and freeze.

There, under the back bumper, are **two small red shoes**.
Perfectly placed.
Pointing upward.
Attached to **tiny feet.**
Tiny legs.
What's left of **a tiny torso** is mostly unrecognizable pulp.

Blood oozes into the grass.
The **bouncy castle sags** behind them like it just gave up on childhood.

It's like *The Wizard of Oz*, but the house is a death machine on wheels, and the Wicked Witch was six years old and liked unicorns.

MAN *(casually)*
Wanna bet that's Dakota?

GIRL *(deadpan)*
She must be flattered we showed up.

He chuckles, nods.

MAN
Good one.

They both stand there for a beat, looking at the crime scene they've made like it's modern art.

Behind them, screams are finally starting.
Parents rush forward.
Someone faints.
A dad starts sobbing into a tray of hot dogs.
The clown pukes in a gift bag.

GIRL *(shrugs)*
Guess she's not blowing out candles this year.

MAN
Or teeth.

They glance at each other.

Then at the **snack table**.

Then—without a word—they head straight for the cake.

EXT. FRONT LAWN – MOMENTS LATER

The scene is full meltdown now.
Screams. Wailing. Sirens returning in the distance—*again*.
Parents flailing like badly scripted NPCs.
The clown has curled into the fetal position and is whispering into a balloon sword.

And there—center lawn, right by the crushed remains of Dakota—sit the man and the girl.

Cross-legged.

Calm.

Each with a paper plate balanced neatly in their laps, a generous slice of **pink-frosted birthday cake** on it.
They hold those little plastic forks like civilized psychopaths.

He chews slowly. Swallows. Sips from a juice box labeled “Capri Sun: Wild Cherry.”

MAN
Moist. Unexpected.

GIRL
Cream’s decent. Frosting’s shit.

MAN
Dakota’s last decision, probably.

She nods, thoughtful.

GIRL
I give it a 6.5.
Wouldn't kill again for it.

They both take another bite.

Behind them, someone finally shrieks:
“OH MY GOD, THAT’S DAKOTA! THAT’S MY BABYYYYY!”

Neither flinch.

MAN *(quietly)*
What's worse: killing a kid, or surviving this frosting?

GIRL
At least she's not here to taste it.

MAN
Small mercies.

Another forkful. Slow. Sacred.

GIRL
You think they'll catch us this time?

EXT. FRONT LAWN – CONTINUOUS

Screams still echo. Sirens growing louder again—this time with intent.
The cake is almost gone. The little forks rest gently on their paper plates like tiny weapons of passive rebellion.

The man wipes his mouth with a napkin covered in glittery unicorns.
Then—his eyes flick under the folding table.

A soft grin spreads across his face.

MAN
Well... Merry Christmas to me.

He lifts the tablecloth like revealing a sacred shrine.

Underneath: A hidden cooler labeled "*ADULTS ONLY*"
He opens it. Inside:
Mini tequila bottles. Vodka. Pre-mixed Long Island Iced Tea.
Someone clearly didn't believe in sobriety during puppet shows.

He pulls out two plastic tumblers, casually pours.

Equal parts menace and hospitality.

Stands up. Walks back. Hands her a cup.

MAN
Hey, kiddo. You like iced tea?

She nods, licking frosting off her fingers.

GIRL
Yeah. Why?

MAN *(hands her the drink)*
Then cheers.

They clink cups.

She takes a long sip.

GIRL *(smacks lips)*
Kinda spicy.

MAN
That's the freedom.

She takes another sip. Doesn't question it. Just sags slightly, letting the first mild alcohol haze soften the edges of catastrophe.

Behind them:
A woman faints. A child vomits. The clown tries to run and falls flat on his nose.

GIRL *(blinking slowly)*
My ears feel weird.

MAN
That's honesty working its way into your bloodstream.

She nods.

GIRL
I think I like it.

MAN
That's how it starts.

He downs the rest of his drink in one motion.
Then pours another.

EXT. FRONT LAWN – MOMENTS LATER

The cake is gone. The juice cups are empty.
The chaos continues behind them—ambulance lights returning, parents wailing, someone trying CPR on what is *definitely* not a salvageable Dakota.

The man exhales deeply, patting his belly like he just left a church buffet.

MAN
Dakota.
Quite the kitsch name, innit?

GIRL
Total kitsch.
White trash.

He stands up, brushes invisible crumbs off his pants.
Reaches out his arm, elbow bent like a gentleman from a better world with worse intentions.

MAN *(with mock elegance)*
May I, mademoiselle?

She grins. Takes his arm. Steps beside him.

They begin to **skip**—not walk, not run—**skip** down the sidewalk.
Leaving behind a smoking ambulance, a collapsed bounce house, and a bloody pair of tiny red shoes.

As they go, they **sing** together, in twisted harmony:

BOTH
♫ *Ding-dong, the kitsch is dead!*
Which small kitsch? The white trash kitsch!
Ding-dong, the white trash kitsch is deeeeeead! ♫

They twirl at the corner.
He dips her. She cackles.

Behind them, a police officer is screaming into a radio.

They keep skipping.

BOTH (louder)
♫ *She didn't blow her candles out—*

But she sure got snuffed with flair—
So ring the bell and spread the word—
There's less Dakota in the air! 🎵

They disappear around the corner.
Two monsters.
Two maniacs.
Two musical theatre kids from hell.

EXT. SIDEWALK – A BLOCK AWAY – CONTINUOUS

They've skipped their way out of Dakota's big day and into a sleepy stretch of suburbia. Quiet lawns. Garden gnomes. The occasional American flag trying to stay relevant.

She stumbles a bit, drops her empty cup, points at a bush and giggles.

GIRL
This your… of teas…
Funny me feel makes.

She squints at her own sentence like it betrayed her.

MAN *(smirking)*
Welcome, kiddo.

He lights a cigarette with the flare of a man officiating a rite.

MAN
This is called being hammered as a coffin nail.
All piss and vinegar.
Three sheets to the wind.
The Holy Trinity of bad decisions.

She leans against a mailbox, eyes half-lidded, grinning like a cartoon frog.

GIRL
My toes are arguing with each other.

MAN
That's your inner demons debating custody.

She tries to walk forward. Ends up sidestepping into a lawn flamingo.

GIRL *(serious tone)*
Do you think I'm drunk?

MAN
I think you're emotionally fluent now.

GIRL
I wanna write a poem. With my knees.

MAN
That's the spirit. Bukowski would be proud.

She holds up a finger.

GIRL
Wait. I might throw up…
Nope. Just a deep burp.
We're fine.

MAN
First rule of drinking: never trust your stomach. It's a known liar.

GIRL
Second rule?

MAN
Always leave the party before you become the police sketch.

She salutes him. Nearly falls over.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET – MOMENTS LATER

The girl hiccups with the kind of grace only a sugar-high eleven-year-old Long Island veteran can muster.

They wander past cookie-cutter houses, past SUV driveways and solar-powered lawn ornaments.
She's skipping again. Kind of. One shoe off. One sock missing.
He's humming the theme from *M*A*S*H*.

Then they stop in front of a **funeral home**.

White columns. Velvet curtains. Sign out front: **"Today We Remember Mildred H. Baxter – 1929–2025."**

GIRL *(reading)*
Mildred. Sounds like a name that dies in alphabetical order.

MAN
She was probably born tired.

They walk up the steps like they were *invited*.

INT. FUNERAL HOME – MINUTES LATER

Mourners in black. Whispered sobs.
An old man playing something weepy on the electric organ.
Open casket front and center. Mildred looks like she's halfway into mummification.

They enter silently. Or rather, uninvited but *inevitably*.

GIRL *(whispering)*
Is there gonna be cake?

MAN
No, kid. This one's all finger sandwiches and unspoken regret.

They scan the room. The crowd barely notices them—too busy grieving, pretending to grieve, or checking their phones.

Then: **the bar**.
Yes. A discreet one in the corner—open.
Because *Mildred had taste*.

The man walks over. Pours himself a generous scotch.

The girl finds a tray of pigs in blankets and stuffs three in her mouth at once.

GIRL *(mouth full)*
I love this place. Nobody's screaming.

MAN
They're just doing it on the inside.

He raises his glass.

MAN
To Mildred.
Who probably hated all these people, and died exactly when she meant to.

She lifts a cup of ginger ale, which she believes is ginger ale.

GIRL
To Mildred. Hope she haunts them.

They clink glasses again.

Then the girl wanders over to the casket. Peeks in. Frowns.

GIRL
She looks like she's mid-sneeze.

MAN
She probably was. Life's cruel like that.

INT. FUNERAL HOME – CONTINUOUS

The girl leans over Mildred's casket, swaying slightly, chewing what might be her seventh pig-in-a-blanket. Her eyes go glassy. Her cheeks inflate just slightly.

GIRL *(blinking)*
Hey…
Why's it smell like grandma, vodka, and closet?

MAN *(sipping scotch)*
Because Mildred's life was 90% those three things.

She stares harder.
Tilts her head.

GIRL *(quietly)*
I think she *moved*.

MAN
That's your stomach trying to escape.

And then—
No warning. No dramatic buildup. Just *reversal*.

She pukes straight into the casket.
A full-force, unholy geyser of frosting, cocktail weenies, Long Island iced tea, Capri Sun, and probably some unspeakable metaphors.

It splashes across Mildred's silk blouse.
Fills the little space under her chin like a gravy boat.
Decorates her with chunks like she's being sacrificed to a buffet god.

A gasp ripples through the crowd.
One mourner drops a plate.
The organist hits a minor chord and just freezes.

The girl wipes her mouth with the edge of her sleeve.

GIRL
Oops.

MAN *(nodding, solemn)*
Better out than in.
Besides… Mildred always wanted to go out warm.

GIRL *(half-crying, half-laughing)*
I baptised her with internal regret!

MAN
And sodium nitrate.

A woman screams, "*Dear GOD!*"
Someone faints into a ficus.
The pastor clutches his pearls.

The man casually drops his empty glass into the punch bowl.

MAN *(to the room)*
She always loved children.

Then to the girl:

MAN
Let's leave before someone tries to sue you for "emotional desecration."

She nods, wiping her chin, already reaching for another mini-quiche.

INT. FUNERAL HOME – SECONDS LATER

Screams echo from the casket. Mildred's open mouth now serves as a punchline to a joke too bitter for words.

But the man—calm, collected, opportunistic—drifts toward the bar again.
Eyes scanning.

He spots it: **a dusty green bottle** with a label written mostly in Slavic consonants and regret.

MAN *(reading aloud)*
"120 proof. Distilled where God forgot."

Perfect.

He snatches a **mourner's black armband** off a distracted man weeping into a cheese cube.
Unwinds it with surgical precision.
Shoves it into the bottle like a flag into conquered soil.
Tips the bottle gently—just enough to moisten the cloth.

The girl sees what he's doing. Lights up.

GIRL *(delighted)*
Molotov cocktail.
Hell yes.

He flicks his lighter. Flame catches fast. Blue-orange, holy as vengeance.

He looks once—just once—into the crowd.
The pastor's mid-prayer.

Someone's filming.
The organist is rebooting his soul.

Then—**he throws it.**

SMASH.
Right in the middle of the floor.

Glass.
Fire.
Panic.
A shriek harmonizing with the whoosh of combustion.
A man's toupee goes up like dry leaves.
Someone screams, *"MY LEG!"*.

The man turns.
Takes the girl's hand.

They walk out slowly. Casually. No rush. Like leaving a disappointing art show.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME – FRONT STEPS – MOMENTS LATER

She turns back.

GIRL *(applauding)*
That was *beautiful*.

Then immediately bends over and **vomits again**, this time into a decorative pot of lavender.

He pats her on the back with gentlemanly detachment.

MAN
You're really coming into your own.

Sirens wail again. For the third time today.

He lights a cigarette with the same lighter that started the fire.

MAN
Well.
What's next?
Waffle House?

GIRL *(spitting bile)*
Only if we burn it down after.

He grins.

MAN
That's the spirit.

And they walk off. Two silhouettes.
One limping.
One sticky.
Both unapologetically free.

EXT. SIDEWALK – MOMENTS LATER

The flames rise behind them—billowing, holy, cleansing.
Mildred's memorial now a cautionary tale.

The man and the girl, hand in hand, skip dance down the street again, like war criminals on a holiday.

He starts to sing, off-key but with gusto:

MAN

♫ *We're off seeing eat the waffles…*
The horrible waffles of house! ♫

She joins in, stumbling but determined:

GIRL

♫ *Because because because because…*
They drown your soul in syrup drouse! ♫

He twirls her. She nearly collapses.
They keep skipping. Past horrified pedestrians.
Past a man walking his dog who just whispers,
"What the fuck…"
Past a Jehovah's Witness locking her gate.

They don't stop.

BOTH (chanting now)

♫ *We're off seeing eat the waffles—*
The horrible waffles of house! ♫

Their voices echo off the buildings like a curse
wrapped in a nursery rhyme.

The sun shines brightly, idiotically, on a day soaked in bile and bourbon.

And somewhere, up ahead, a neon sign flickers:
“Waffle House – Open 24 Hours”

He points with his cigarette like it’s a prophecy fulfilled.

MAN
There she is. Temple of the lost. Church of the sticky table.

GIRL *(squinting)*
Looks haunted.

MAN
It is. By the ghosts of breakfasts past.

And they skip forward. Toward grease. Toward waffles.
Toward whatever damnation lives on Formica and coffee stains.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE – MOMENTS LATER

Grease in the air.
Fluorescent lights flicker like they're dying of embarrassment.
A cook flips something that's no longer legally bacon.
A drunk man in a booth sings to a ketchup bottle.

They slide into a corner booth.
Sticky menu. Sticky table. Sticky moral compass.

A waitress with dead eyes and three divorce rings takes their order.

MAN
Two waffles, extra butter. Hash browns. Scattered, smothered, covered, murdered.

GIRL
Grits. And a chocolate milk. In a glass shaped like hope.

The waitress walks away, not paid enough to question.

As they wait, he pulls out the folding knife. Freshly cleaned. Blade gleaming under the fluorescent hells above.

He sets it on the table. Looks at her.

MAN
Have you ever severed a finger?

She shakes her head slowly.

GIRL
Not yet.

MAN *(smiles, slides the knife toward her)*
Live a little.

She stares at the blade. Fingers twitch.
She picks it up. Turns it in her hands like a foreign language.
Grins.

GIRL
Do I get to keep it?

MAN
Only if you use it properly.

The food arrives. Steam rising like a holy offering. The waiter, young and miserable, sets it down, lays the bill gently on the table.

WAITER
Here you go. Whenever you're ready.

The man moves fast.
Grabs the waiter's wrist.
Slams it flat on the table, right between the waffles and grits.

Everything goes still.

MAN
Now… take your time.

The waiter freezes. Blinks.
Mouth opens. Nothing comes out.

The girl raises the knife slightly. Testing weight.
Her hand is steady.

She looks at the man.

GIRL
Which one?

MAN
Dealer's choice.

The jukebox cuts out.
Someone drops a fork.

The smell of syrup now mingles with the raw scent of terror.

MAN *(to the waiter)*
You've got two options. One: you walk out of here with one less finger.
Two: you squirt arterial blood on the waffles.

Beat.

GIRL
Three: you scream, and I test this knife on something central.

The waiter whimpers.

And then—he nods.

MAN *(pleasantly)*
Good man.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

The air goes **silent**.

The fryer still bubbles, unaware.
A cockroach pauses under the neon "OPEN" sign like it knows something sacred is happening.

The waiter's hand trembles, wrist still pinned flat against the Formica by the man's grip.

The **knife glints** in the girl's hand—trembling slightly, not from fear, but from the **electric thrill of control**.

She studies the hand. Each finger like a menu item.
She picks the **pinky**.

GIRL
This one. It's the most useless.
Symbolic.

MAN *(smiling like a proud uncle)*
Start small.
Sharp, straight, no sawing.

WAITER *(barely audible)*
Please…

She doesn't answer.
She **presses down**.

The knife slides **cleanly**, almost delicately.
Cartilage gives with a little crunch.
Tendon pops like a snapped guitar string.

The **pinky** comes off in one perfect motion—lands in the butter pool on the waffle like a garnish from hell.

The waiter SCREAMS.
Or tries to.
It comes out as a high-pitched choking whimper, like a balloon slowly deflating into madness.

MAN *(calmly)*
You moved. That was sloppy of you.

GIRL *(wipes the blade on a napkin)*
Do I still get to keep it?

MAN
The knife or the finger?

She shrugs.

GIRL
Both?

The man releases the waiter's arm.

He crumples to the floor, cradling the stump,
sobbing into his apron.

The Waffle House stares.
No one moves.
No one dares.

The drunk at the bar claps once. Real slow.

DRUNK GUY
That's the cleanest cut I've seen since '97.

The man lifts his fork, cuts into his waffle.
Eats a bite. Chews thoughtfully.

MAN
Not bad.
A little heavy on the iron.

The girl pockets the pinky.
Wraps it in a napkin.
Takes a sip of chocolate milk.

GIRL
First one always tastes weird, huh?

He nods.

MAN
Like betrayal and corn syrup.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE – STILL ABSURDLY ON FIRE METAPHORICALLY

The man digs into his coat.
Pulls out a second knife—identical to the one the girl just used. Sleek. Foldable. Elegant like a lie told too well.

He flicks it open and twirls it once with theatrical flair.

MAN
Keep that one.
I've got his twin right here.
We're knife twins now.

He raises an eyebrow, solemn. Like this is a sacred moment.

She rolls her eyes.

GIRL *(mocking)*
Woo hoo.
Lucky me.
Best. Day. *Ever.*

She sips her chocolate milk again, dead inside.

MAN
Oh yeah?

He nods toward the **napkin-wrapped pinky**, which she's placed next to her grits like a tiny, forgotten appetizer.

MAN
Then I won't teach you how to preserve that finger. It's gonna rot in two days. Smell like regret and ham.

She gasps.
Eyes wide.

Instant **puppy face**.
Lower lip out. Eyes glistening.

GIRL *(pleading)*
Oh nooooo.
Come *on*.
I just got it. Don't let it die on me.

He leans back, smug.

MAN
You should've thought of that before the sarcasm.

GIRL *(hands clasped in mock prayer)*
Please. I'll be good. I'll use the other knife only for decorative stabbing.

He sighs. Takes one last bite of waffle. Wipes his mouth.

MAN
Fine.

He reaches across the table, takes the napkin, unwraps it slightly, inspects the finger like a jeweler examining a flawed diamond.

MAN
We'll need alcohol. Ice. A container.
Or a jar of pickles if we're improvising.

She grins.

GIRL
You *do* love me.

MAN
I have no proof of that in any jurisdiction.

She raises her new knife in salute.

GIRL
Knife twins.

MAN *(raising his)*
Knife twins.

They clink the blades like wine glasses.

The Waffle House burns silently in the background—not in fire, but in shame and trauma.

Ah, yes. Let us not forget the *Greek chorus of trauma* bleeding politely in the corner while our antiheroes toast over waffles and necrosis.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE – SAME TIME

The **waiter** is on the floor, curled into the fetal position behind the counter.
His **hand** is wrapped in **napkins, ketchup packets, and denial**.
Blood is **fountaining** from the stump like a macabre soda dispenser.
He's trying to cry quietly, but the gurgling sobs echo off the grease-slicked tile.

Near the jukebox, **a woman in leopard-print pajamas** is praying into her cell phone.
It isn't even on.
She's just hoping someone, *somewhere*, hears her sins.

At the far end of the diner, the **drunk guy** is halfway through his second Bloody Mary (self-made), live-commentating like he's hosting a sports event no one asked for.

DRUNK GUY
And there it is, folks! That's the ninth finger—gone but not forgotten.
Girl's got form. Real *panache*. Could be varsity.

In the booth nearest the bathroom, **a cook has barricaded himself** behind a mountain of frozen hash brown bags.
He's whispering to a can of Crisco like it's his emotional support animal.

COOK
Don't look at them, Ricky. They'll smell your soul. Don't look.

The Waffle House's ancient wall clock *clicks*.
One minute past noon.
Somewhere, in a parallel world, people are eating brunch quietly.

Here, **a child wields a finger**, a man cleans a knife with napkin-grade reverence, and the remaining customers are **hostages of ambiance**.

WAFFLE HOUSE MANAGER *(bursting in from the back)*
WHAT THE *FU*—

He stops mid-word.
Sees the blood. The pinky. The pancakes.
The *vibe*.

Locks eyes with the man.

MAN *(sips coffee)*
You're out of syrup.

INT. WAFFLE HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

The **manager** stands frozen. Jaw slack.
Blood. Toast. Finger. Knife. Child.

He opens his mouth—

MAN *(interrupting, dead calm)*
Yeah, yeah.
Health code violation, customer injury, ritual desecration.
Save it.

He flips the bird.

MANAGER
Hey, you can't just—!

MAN *(flips him a second bird, even slower)*
Correction: I just did.

Turns to the girl, still licking syrup off her knife like it's a popsicle made of regret.

MAN
Hey, kid.
Ever heard of an old-people video game called GTA?

She snorts.

GIRL
Hey!
It still exists. They're on, like, GTA XL: Meth Jesus Edition now.

MAN
Does it?
Wow.

He flicks some ash into his now-empty coffee cup.

MAN
Well then, you remember how when you commit crimes, the cops start showing up?

GIRL *(gasps in recognition)*
The *wanted level!*

MAN
Exactly. Stars above your head, each one a personal lawsuit.

She looks out the window—sees flashing lights far off, again.

GIRL
You're right.
We must have… like… a *million* stars by now.

MAN
We're the goddamn Milky Way of felonies.

GIRL *(raising her juice box)*
To level five.

They toast.
A siren gets louder.

MAN
Time to leave before they spawn helicopters.

He stands.
She follows, skipping just slightly.

Behind them, the **manager collapses into a booth**, mouthing the words *"insurance doesn't cover this."*

The waiter is trying to tie his stump with a bendy straw.

DRUNK GUY (saluting)
Godspeed, you domestic terrorists.

And the door **chimes open** as they exit—two monsters.
Full stars.
No shame.

EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE – JUST OUTSIDE – CONTINUOUS

The **door chimes shut** behind them.

The man keeps walking, lighting another cigarette with a calm that says *this is Tuesday*.

MAN
See what I did walking out?

She turns.

The hand-sanitizer dispenser by the door—one of those big plastic foot-pump jobs from the COVID era—is now a roaring pillar of flame.
Like a righteous geyser.
Three diners are staggering out, shirts ablaze, flailing like human candles.

A plastic high chair melts nearby with a sound like someone whispering "oops" through a megaphone.

She bows low, dramatically, eyes shining.

GIRL
Maestro.

He tips his cigarette to her like a conductor acknowledging a standing ovation.

MAN
Next one's yours.
You invent it. Surprise me.

She nods solemnly.

GIRL
Give me… an hour. And a Dollar Tree.

They walk into the horizon.
One carrying a blade, the other carrying potential energy and snack crumbs.

Sirens in the background.

Flames behind them.

EXT. EMPTY PARKING LOT – TWILIGHT

They're walking now. No direction. Just motion.
Smoke on the wind, sirens fading behind.

The world quiet again, like it's bracing for their next verse.

He exhales smoke into the air, like punctuation.

MAN
Do you know who *Albert Camus* is?

GIRL *(frowns)*
A… Belgian waffle?

He winces like she slapped his philosophy degree.

MAN
Ah.
The beauty of capitalist education.

She shrugs, unbothered, poking at a loose tooth.

MAN
He was a French writer. Chain-smoker. Probably smelled like sadness and red wine.
Wrote a book called *The Stranger.*

GIRL
Sounds boring.

MAN
It is.
But that's the point.
It's about a guy who doesn't care about anything.
Meets nice people. Horrible people.
Doesn't matter. He's empty.
Then one day he kills a man who had nothing to do with anything.
Just… because the sun was in his eyes.

She stops walking.

GIRL
Wait.

MAN
Mm?

GIRL
So, he's like...
us.

He nods.

MAN
Bingo. Existentialism in action.
You wake up. You breathe.
You kill someone irrelevant.
Then you go to prison or don't.
Either way—sandwiches taste the same.

She whistles low.

GIRL
So what happened to him?

MAN
They executed him.
Because feelings scare people more than bullets.

She nods thoughtfully.

GIRL
Was there a waffle?

MAN
Sadly, no.

GIRL
Then I don't care.

And they walk on.

One filled with philosophy.
The other with chocolate milk and the ability to end lives like punctuation marks

EXT. DUSTY BACKROAD – SUNSET
BLEEDING INTO DUSK

They walk past a field of rusted shopping carts and half-dead billboards.
Power lines buzz overhead like nervous lies.

He lights a cigarette with the last match from a motel he doesn't remember sleeping in.

MAN
Alright. Easier one.
Ever heard of *Johnny Cash*?

GIRL *(brows furrowed)*
A new model of ATM?

He stops. Turns to her like she just kicked Plato in the nuts.

MAN
Your generation deserves global warming.

GIRL
Already got it. Thanks.

MAN
Johnny Cash was a man. A voice. A walking funeral in black.
He wrote a song about a guy who shot a man in Reno…
just to watch him die.

She pauses. Considers that.

GIRL
That's messed up.

MAN
That's America.

She narrows her eyes. Starts walking again.

GIRL
Cut it short.
You want to go to *Reno*, right?

He smiles. The grin of a man who knows there's nothing left but distance and consequence.

MAN
Every story needs a climax.

GIRL
Cool. Let's climax Reno.
And if I don't find waffles this time, I'm burning a library.

He flicks the cigarette into the roadside weeds.

MAN
Deal.

They keep walking west.
Two silhouettes.
Knife twins.
Heading to the one place where people still gamble with bullets and call it justice.

Exquisite. The mentorship continues—crime as a gift, transportation as a wish granted by a cigarette-smoking fairy godfather of destruction.

EXT. ROADSIDE – SUNSET FADING TO NIGHT

They stand at the edge of the highway.
Dust curling up in little whirlwinds.
Reno's still a rumor on the horizon.

He takes a drag, leans on a dead mile marker that reads:
“RENO – 382 MILES”

MAN
Alright, kid.
This time *you* choose the vehicle.
And *you* drive it.

He taps ash off his cigarette, stares at her like Santa with a rap sheet.

MAN
Let me worry about how to get it.
You just tell me your Christmas wish.

She pauses. Looks up at the stars coming out.
Thinks. Deeply.

Then she grins.

GIRL
Ice cream truck.
The janky kind. Off-brand. Slightly haunted.

One that plays “Pop Goes the Weasel” but in *minor key*.

He raises an eyebrow, impressed.

MAN
Specific. I like that.

GIRL
Big steering wheel.
Room in the back for regrets and snacks.

MAN
You’re describing my dream marriage.

GIRL
Also it should smell like freezer burn and fear.

He flicks his cigarette into the dark.

MAN
Alright.
An undead ice cream hearse.
Let me see what I can dig up.

GIRL
Can I repaint it?

MAN
Only in blood or bubblegum pink.

She nods solemnly.

GIRL
I accept these terms.

EXT. DESOLATE BUS STOP – NIGHT

She's sitting on a cracked plastic bench.
Candy stick in mouth.
Pinky in a pickle jar.
Feet swinging. Boredom leaking out of her pores.

Streetlight above her buzzes like a mosquito dying slowly.

Then—**headlights**.
Boxy. Big. Beige. *Utilitarian dread on wheels.*

A UPS truck rolls up, engine coughing like it disapproves of itself.

It jerks to a stop in front of her.
Door swings open.
He leans out, grinning like he just gave birth to chaos.

MAN
Closer truck I could find.

She stares.

MAN
Turns out all the ice cream trucks are taken.
By pedos.
And they don't let 'em go.

Beat.

GIRL *(climbing in)*
That tracks.

MAN
Like, aggressively don't let go.
One guy bit me. Another offered a trade—two popsicles for my soul.

She plops into the driver's seat. Massive steering wheel.
UPS route map still taped to the dash. Smells like cardboard and union apathy.

GIRL
We painting it?

MAN
We're renaming it first.
I was thinking: *"Express Delivery of Doom."*

GIRL
Too long. Let's call it *Brown Thunder*.

MAN
That's the spirit.

She revs it. The engine groans. A dog barks in fear somewhere.

GIRL
What's in the back?

MAN
Mostly boxes.
One mannequin.
And what might be the scent of human panic.

GIRL
Perfect.

She slams the gas.
They roar off.
The taillights disappear into the night.

The streetlight flickers one last time.
Then dies.

EXT. SUBURBAN INTERSECTION – NIGHT

The **UPS truck** barrels down the empty street. Headlights blaring. Engine howling like a dying baritone.

Suddenly—**a woman pushing a baby stroller** crosses in front of them.

MAN *(grinning, wild)*
Come on! This is *GTA calling*. You *have* to do it!

GIRL *(deadpan)*
You're a terrible influence.

She doesn't swerve.

The truck **plows through the stroller**.

BOINK.

The stroller launches like it was built by NASA.

IN SLOW MOTION:

What may loom like a **baby doll** inside flies through the air.

Its eyes spin.
Its arms flap.

WOMAN *(screaming)*
MY JOB! I'M JUST BABYSITTING!!

The doll-looking figure smashes into a **utility pole transformer**.

BUZZZZZTTT!
Sparks erupt. The **baby doll skeleton flashes visible**, cartoon-style.
The power surges.
A **pile of dry leaves ignites.**

Leaves burst.
A **tree catches fire.**

A nearby **house lights up**, porch ablaze.
The **family inside rushes out** in bathrobes, slippers, and confusion.

FATHER *(arms in the air, despairing)*
I MOVED HERE FROM ALABAMA TO AVOID THIS!

A **flaming garden gnome** flies off the porch and lands on the hood of the UPS truck.

GIRL *(pointing at it)*
Souvenir?

MAN
Add it to the dash.

They keep driving.

The flaming gnome watches the road with hollow ceramic eyes.

Behind them: sparks, screaming, lawn flamingos on fire.

MAN
Best delivery route ever.

INT. UPS TRUCK – MOVING – NIGHT

The flaming garden gnome rattles slightly on the dashboard.

They've stopped laughing. For a moment.p
The engine hums. Streetlights blur past like guilty thoughts.

She's staring out the window. Eyes narrowed.

GIRL *(quietly)*
That wasn't a doll…
Was it?

Silence.

The man exhales. No words.

GIRL *(again)*
It moved weird.
Like floppy but… like it had joints. Not hinges.

He keeps driving.
Doesn't look at her.

She turns toward him now. Voice sharper. Tighter.

GIRL
That wasn't a *doll*, right?

MAN *(finally)*
Does it matter?

A pause.

She sits back, chewing that answer like gristle.

GIRL *(softer)*
It does if I sleep tonight.

He flicks ashes out the window.

MAN
Then don't.

Outside, the burning tree fades into the distance.
The UPS truck rolls deeper into darkness.

The kind that doesn't need headlights.
The kind that follows you inside.

EXT. INTERSECTION – NIGHT

The UPS truck rolls to a stop at a red light.
Still humming. Still trailing sins and smoke.

From the side street, emerging like bad historical fanfiction, comes a **pickup truck**.
Flying two confederate flags.
Packed in the back: **a cluster of white men in white robes and pointy hoods**.

Faces exposed. Sunburnt. Confused.
The kind of facial expressions that scream *"married cousin"* and *"didn't read the Constitution, just smelled it once."*

One of them leans out, holding a **Google Maps screenshot printed on paper**.

INBRED LEADER
Heya, fella.
You know how to get to—uh—

He squints. Holds it closer.
Another hooded moron behind him is tapping at a phone like it's a magic rock.

INBRED #2
I think we opened Gmail. That's not the map.

INBRED #3 *(muttering)*
How'd it get in airplane mode if it's on the ground?

The man in the UPS truck leans out the window.
Takes a slow drag. No expression.

MAN
Yeah.

He points back the way they came.

MAN

Just past the burning tree.
Can't miss it.

The hooded idiots nod gratefully.

INBRED LEADER

Much obliged, brother!

MAN *(flat)*

Not your brother.

The light turns green.
The UPS truck pulls forward.

GIRL *(quietly)*

Do they… know it's a tree on fire 'cause of us?

MAN

They'll find out.
Hopefully while parked under it.

She chuckles once.

GIRL
Natural selection in action.

He nods.

MAN
And we didn't even need to touch 'em.

They roll into the darkness, leaving behind the GPS-confused Klan truck… and whatever poetic justice waits near the still-blazing oak.

INT. UPS TRUCK – CRUISING THROUGH DESERT NIGHT

The desert road stretches forever.
No lights. No towns. Just **black asphalt and bad choices**.

The girl yawns. Slaps her cheek. Eyes heavy.

GIRL
Gotta sleep sometime.

MAN
That's a trap.

GIRL
Taking turns at the wheel?

MAN *(shrugs)*
I'm not driving.

GIRL *(half-outraged)*
Dude.

MAN
What? If I'm awake, I drive.
If I get tired, I let go of the wheel.
That's the pact.

GIRL
That's *not* a pact. That's suicidal roulette.

MAN
Roulette has better odds.

She sighs. Reaches for the wheel.

GIRL

Fine. I'll drive.
So what—when we stop, we just… camp in the back?

MAN *(offended)*

We are *not beasts.*

GIRL *(deadpan)*

We're knife twins who drive a stolen government truck.

MAN

Exactly. Standards.

He stubs his cigarette out on the dashboard with unnecessary ceremony.

MAN

We massacre someone and take their hotel room. Simple. Classic. Civilized.

She nods thoughtfully.

GIRL
Bathrobe. Complimentary mints. Maybe a minibar.

MAN
Now you're thinking like an adult.

GIRL
Do we pick the hotel by price range or level of trauma?

MAN
We go four-star. Nobody expects violence in thread count that high.

She signals left, spotting a road sign: RENO – 87 MILES

GIRL
Think we can get blood out of Egyptian cotton?

MAN
Only if you tip housekeeping.

INT. UPS TRUCK – NIGHT – RENO SIGNS NEARING

The truck hums along. Headlights catching bugs that die for no reason.
The neon aura of Reno flickers on the horizon like a cheap promise.

The man stretches his back, groans like a tomb door opening.

MAN
We're massacring two families.
Getting two rooms.
I'm not staying in a room with you in a bathrobe.

She stares at him like he just declared war on logic.

GIRL
Dude.
I'm *eleven*.
I don't even have a chest.
I look just like a boy in a bathrobe.

He glares ahead. Jaw tightening.

MAN
I'm not even *getting into* this conversation.

GIRL
But I'm just saying—*

MAN *(already jamming his fingers into his ears)*
BLAAAAHAHAABALLAAAHABALA—

She stares.

GIRL
You're such a *weirdo.*

He keeps it going, louder now.
Like his inner monologue has been replaced with elevator static.

MAN
BLLLAAAAAABLABLABLA—

She rolls her eyes.
Grips the wheel tighter. Swerves gently toward the Reno exit.

GIRL *(muttering)*
Two rooms. Fine.
But I'm stealing the better minibar.

MAN *(muffled from under hands)*
Only if you murder better than me.

GIRL
Oh please.
I'm taking out the loud one and the dad with the bad hip.

MAN *(removing fingers)*
Dibs on the room with a window facing the neon sign.

GIRL
Only if it comes with a Bible I can scribble obscenities in.

They both nod. Pact made.

INT. HOTEL – HALLWAY – NIGHT

Two doors.
One room: clean.
The other: stacked wall to wall with **still-warm corpses**—limbs tangled, eyes open, faces frozen mid-chew. A vacation photo now in 3D death.

The UPS truck is parked outside like a delivery of despair.

They stand outside the **corpse room**, arguing at full volume. The air smells like perfume, gunpowder, and medium-rare suburbia.

GIRL *(arms crossed)*
I'm a *kid*. You have to let me have the corpse room.

MAN *(lighting a cigarette)*
Being a minor doesn't give you squatter's rights on dead people.

GIRL

It's called *trauma processing*.

MAN

It's called *finders keepers*.

I saw them eating dinner together.

It was all warm and familial.

That room is *mine*.

GIRL *(balling fists)*

I'm gonna scream.

MAN *(deadpan, immediate)*

I'm gonna do BLLLAAAHABLAHBLAAH.

GIRL

You wouldn't dare.

He plugs his ears, starts it up:

MAN *(fingers in ears)*

BLLLAAAHABLAHHBLAHHABLAAAAHH—

GIRL *(screaming over him)*
I'M GONNA PEE IN YOUR SHOE!!

MAN
ALREADY PEED IN MY *OWN* SHOE TO ESTABLISH DOMINANCE!!

They shout over each other. Muffled. Hysterical.

Inside the clean room: a single housekeeping towel slowly soaks up a drip of red from a bullet hole in the ceiling.

Finally, they stop. Breathing heavily.

GIRL
Rock paper scissors?

MAN
Loser gets the *clean* room?

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT – NIGHT

Under flickering lights, surrounded by corpses (in one room), silence (in the other), and a general fog of *unspeakable things,* they face off.

GIRL
Alright.
Best of three.
Winner gets the meat room.

They ready their hands.

TOGETHER
Rock. Paper. Scissors.

She throws **paper**.
He throws **scissors**—not just metaphorical.

He whips out his folding knife and *nicks* the skin between her fingers. A tiny, perfect **paper cut**.

MAN *(grinning)*
Paper cut.

She stares at the blood. Then at him. Then back at the blood.

GIRL
Dude…

MAN
No one said this wasn't *advanced rules*.

Next round.

TOGETHER
Rock. Paper. Scissors.

He throws **rock**.

She throws a literal **punch**—clocking him in the jaw.
He doesn't flinch. Doesn't blink.
Stands there like an old statue that's seen worse wars.

Then—**his turn.**

He punches back.

It's not theatrical. It's **Newtonian**.

She launches **across the parking lot**, cartwheeling over a shopping cart, skipping off a curb, and landing **face down, ass up, sliding** across the gravel like a garden gnome on ice.

The asphalt shreds her pants, her pride, and the last layer of skin on her butt.

She groans. Doesn't cry.
Just lifts a single, trembling middle finger from the crater.

He strolls over, casual, lighting a fresh cigarette.

MAN
I saw this in *El Dorado*.
Red-haired chick punches James Caan.
He punches back—harder.
She tries again. He looks her dead in the eyes and says:

He leans down, flicks ash dramatically.

MAN
“Careful. I always hit harder.”

She glares up at him, covered in blood, pebbles, and regret.

GIRL
This… means I get the room, right?

MAN
Absolutely not.

INT. HOTEL – HALLWAY – 2:00 AM

The sterile hallway hums with broken fluorescents and guilt.
Both doors creak open at the same time.
Two shadowed figures in mismatched bathrobes and matching bloodstains.

They lock eyes across the hallway like dueling ghosts.

MAN

You aren't sleeping.

GIRL

You aren't either.

MAN

So what was the whole fuss about sleeping with the corpses if you're not actually sleeping?

GIRL

Same question, boomer.

MAN

Insomnia?

GIRL

Since I was a baby.

MAN

You *still* are a baby.

GIRL

You are a baby.

MAN
No, *you* are a baby.

From behind the wall—**next room over**, a raspy, tired voice cuts through the drywall like an old saw.

MUFFLED VOICE
Everybody is a baby.

Pause.

MUFFLED VOICE
And you can kill my wife and sleep with her corpse,
I'd be much obliged.
But cool it.
Some of us don't have insomnia.

Silence.

The two freeze.

GIRL *(whispers)*
Should we…?

MAN
What, knock and ask politely?

GIRL
No. Just take her and leave a thank-you note.

MAN
That’s oddly considerate for us.

GIRL
Well, he offered.

MAN
True. Hospitality's not dead.
Just… his wife will be soon.

They nod in the dim hallway.

Both doors creak shut again. Quiet. For now.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – MORNING SUNLIGHT

Light streams through the window like nothing's wrong.
Because in this room, for one man… *nothing* is.

The **husband**, now alone, lies in bed.
Diagonal.
Arms sprawled like a starfish of joy.
One leg hooked outside the covers. One pillow under his knee.
No snoring beside him. No breath-stealing spouse.
No night sweats caused by arguments about thermostat settings.

He yawns—**a majestic, full-body, soul-realigning yawn**.
Grins. Sighs. Pure bliss.

Next to the bed, the **wife's corpse** is now neatly stacked atop the **pile of other dead bodies**, tucked under a "Do Not Disturb" sign someone kindly laid across her chest.

The man reaches for a glass of water. Drinks deeply. Smiles wider.

HUSBAND (to himself)
Slept like a baby in a coma.
Diagonal, baby.
The sacred sleep position of *men of all cultures*.

He props himself up. Looks over at the corpse pile.

HUSBAND
Thanks, hon.
Best night I've had in twenty-two years.

He gets up, stretches, lets out a back crack so satisfying it echoes like a gunshot.

HUSBAND *(to no one in particular)*
Breakfast buffet. Let's go see if God still makes waffles.

He whistles as he dresses.

Behind him, one of the bodies groans faintly. He doesn't turn.

HUSBAND
Tough luck. Room's paid through noon.

Door closes behind him.
The corpse pile shifts. One leg falls off the side like an afterthought.

EXT. RENO CITY LIMIT – MORNING

The **UPS truck** hums down the desert road again.
Back doors slightly ajar, flapping lazily.
A motel robe hangs from the passenger-side mirror like a war trophy.

Inside, **the girl is driving**, hands just barely at ten and two.
Wind in her hair, bugs on the windshield, and **zero remorse** in the rearview mirror.

She sips from a stolen minibar Coke. Looks contemplative.

GIRL

We made a man happy.

MAN *(lighting a cigarette)*

It's nice to be nice sometimes.

A beat. They both nod.

GIRL

Do we kill someone else today?

MAN

Only if they're in the way.

GIRL

Or standing still for too long?

MAN

Or disrespecting waffles.

GIRL

Good morals.

They ride on.
Sun climbing.
Radio off.
Only the sound of wind, tires, and righteous destruction.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY – LATE MORNING

A lonely stretch of two-lane road.
Sun baking the asphalt like a griddle.
Patrol car pulled over, lights spinning lazily.
A **family sedan** stopped in front of it.
A cop leans into the driver's window, giving the usual soul-dead speech about "rolling stops" and "taillights."

The **UPS truck** crawls into view, slowing.

Inside—

GIRL *(already sighing)*
I know, I know. I'm stopping already.

MAN *(eyes sparkling)*
Mmm.
Like a pie cooling on a windowsill.

He opens the door. Steps out into the sun.
Walks to the patrol car's open door.
Sees the **shotgun** on its rack.
Takes it gently, reverently.

Walks toward the cop.
Slow. Measured. Mythic.

CLA-CLAK.

Then—**chink, chink.**
He drops **loose change** into the barrel.
Thin dimes.
Just like Kristofferson in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*.

He steps closer.
Raises the barrel.

KABOOM.

Cop is launched backward like a ragdoll full of bureaucratic meat.

Silence.

Smoke curls from the shotgun.

He leans into the open window of the family sedan, casually.

Inside: wide-eyed parents. Traumatized children. A half-eaten Go-Gurt.

MAN
Service offered by *Lunatics Inc.*
Enjoy your trip.
Don't drive safely.
It's not worth it.

The car peels away in raw terror. Tires screaming. One of the kids throws a juice box out the window.

He shrugs, shoulders the shotgun, walks back to the UPS truck.

GIRL
You done?

MAN
For now.

They drive off.
In the distance, the patrol car quietly catches fire.

EXT. HIGHWAY – MOVING – MIDDAY

The **UPS truck** barrels down the long straight road.
Desert heat waves ripple on the horizon.
Dead cop behind. Peace shattered. Nothing ahead but miles and bad ideas.

Inside—

MAN *(stretching out, shotgun across his lap)*
Hey kiddo…
Ever heard of **Sam Peckinpah**?

GIRL *(groaning instantly)*
Oh *not again*.

MAN *(ignoring her)*
He directed *The Wild Bunch*.
Blood. Honor. Betrayal.
Men walking into gunfire like it's a baptism.

She **rolls her eyes so hard** they practically *audibly click* in her skull.
Then lightly bangs her forehead on the steering wheel.

GIRL *(muttering to herself)*
Should've stayed with the corpse pile.

His voice continues, *fading into the distance* as the truck grows smaller down the highway—

MAN (V.O.)
Peckinpah understood death.
It's not about the killing. It's about the *resignation*… the choreography of—

GIRL (V.O.)
—shut up shut up shut up…

The wind takes their noise.
The truck disappears over a hill.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. UPS TRUCK – DAY – COMEDIC MONTAGE – MUSIC OVERLAY

José Luis Perales. "Un velero llamado libertad."

♫ *"Ayer se fué…"* ♫

SHOT 1 – INSIDE THE TRUCK
He's lecturing with manic conviction, miming shot composition with his fingers, mouthing *"Howard Hawks", "screwball comedy", "narrative economy."*

She shouts back wordlessly, making exaggerated blah-blah-blah gestures, eyes bulging, fingers in ears.

SHOT 2 – HER PHONE
She holds it up: a **TikTok clip** of someone lip-

syncing Karl Popper over a trap beat while twerking in a lab coat.

SHOT 3 – HIM

He stares at it. Blankly.
Then slowly picks up the **shotgun**, opens his mouth, and mock-stuffs the barrel in.
Rolls his eyes dramatically like a Shakespearean suicide.

SHOT 4 – HER

Claps.
Gives him a 9.5 on an imaginary judging panel.

SHOT 5 – THE TWO OF THEM

Now playfully arguing—he pantomimes *His Girl Friday* with wild eyebrow acting, she responds with TikTok finger dances and "Zoomer" faces.

SHOT 6 – MUSIC HITS CHORUS

🎵 *"Y se marchooooooo…"* 🎵

He leans out the window, scarf blowing like a Revolutionary.
She's steering with one foot, filming him with the phone.

SHOT 7 – SUNSET BEHIND THEM

The truck bounces down the highway like it's fleeing logic itself.
A trail of smoke, TikTok notifications, and film history trivia in its wake.

A seagull flies overhead. It flips them off.

INT. UPS TRUCK – STILL MOVING – LATE AFTERNOON

He's back in storytelling mode. Cigarette dangling. Shirt open. Belly catching crumbs.

MAN

And so I show this picture, right? Me and my wife. And the guy goes: *"Wow, your daughter is*

beautiful!"
And I go—*ha!*— *"She's a year older than me!"*

GIRL *(squinting)*
Whooooa dude...
Wait.
You have a **wife**?

MAN *(blinks, pauses)*
What? Yeah, I *do* and—
...
Oh shit.

GIRL
Don't.
Don't *tell me* that...

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN ROOFTOP – GOLDEN HOUR

A **woman in combat boots and a wedding ring**,
perched like vengeance on a sun-drenched roof.
Long black ponytail. Lipstick perfect.

She's aiming a **sniper rifle** at the street below—but the scope's lens cap is still on.

She's not *firing.*
She's **mouthing it.**

WIFE *(aiming at joggers, strollers, pigeons)*
Bang.
Bang.
Bang.

She chews gum. Calmly.
Then: she sets the crosshairs gently on a photo taped inside the scope lid.
The man. Holding a bottle. Half-drunk, half-shirtless. Grinning.

WIFE *(softly, to herself)*
Oh...
When he comes *home*...

She slurps soda through a straw.
Eyes narrow.
The scope lens cap clicks **open**.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. UPS TRUCK

GIRL
So...
This story ends with her shooting you in the spine while you're peeing on a cactus, right?

EXT. ROADSIDE – DESERT – EVENING

The **UPS truck** is parked sideways across a long-abandoned gas station lot.
No gas. No signage. One **sun-bleached telephone booth** standing like a surrealist relic.

Inside the **glass coffin**, for some reason, the **man** talks into his **cell phone**, pacing in circles like he's inside a confession box for the damned.

Outside, **the girl** sits on the curb.
Rolling cigarettes with mechanical precision.
She doesn't smoke.
Just stacks them in neat little pyramids like death-themed origami.

He finally steps out.
Squints into the sunset like it owes him money.

GIRL
Wife calm now?

MAN *(staring off, grave)*
Kiddo...
A *booth* in the Midwest.

GIRL *(without looking up)*
We're in the middle of nowhere, but this ain't the Midwest.
This is the *desert.*

MAN *(undeterred)*
But *still*...

He lifts an invisible mic and sings, slightly off-key:

MAN

"As I remember your eyes
Were bluer than robin's eggs
My poetry was lousy, you said
Where are you calling from?
A booth in the Midwest..."

GIRL *(rising in protest)*
Oh don't you—
Don't you *dare*—

MAN *(grinning)*
Joan Baez. Bob Dylan.

GIRL
No. No more *Flintstones*. We *talked* about this.

MAN *(already scrolling on phone)*
Oh shut up.

He hits *play*.
"Diamonds and Rust" begins, soft and sacred.

Her protest dissolves.

She sits again. Eyes distant. Quiet.

GIRL

Okay. I'll let this pass.

Nice words.

And the voice…

It's divine.

MAN *(sitting beside her)*

It's the story about—

GIRL

—Dude. Don't ruin it.

They sit together in silence.

The sun slides down the sky.

A pyramid of cigarettes leans slightly in the breeze.

♫ *"Well, I'll be damned… here comes your ghost again…"* ♫

EXT. GAS STATION – NIGHT

A flickering neon sign: *EAT & FUEL.*
Half the lights dead.
A stuffed possum hangs in the window holding a "Try our BURRITOS!" sign.

The **UPS truck** idles by pump #4.
Girl tops off the tank. **Man** emerges from the mini-mart holding two **microwaved burritos** like he's just come down from Mount Sinai.

They sit on the curb. Eat in silence. Then—

MAN *(mouth full)*
You know what?

GIRL
Don't say it.

MAN
No, seriously.
These burritos?
Pretty fucking good.

GIRL

Oh no. You're doing a whole speech.

MAN *(waving burrito like a conductor's baton)*

People love to bitch about gas station food.
Microwaved burritos, especially.
But these—these right here—
Spicy. Cohesive.
Not soggy like microwave pizza.
The tortilla folds like it was raised in a monastery.
Filling stays in place unless *you* mess it up.

GIRL *(half-sarcastic)*

True tortilla integrity.

MAN

Exactly! Why do people always whine about things?

GIRL

Because whining is free.
And most people think they're food critics because they once watched *The Bear* and posted a photo of a salad.

MAN

Amen.

Also, the *real* reason this burrito's a win?

The diner next door is full of families.

Crying babies. Sticky hands.

One dad was talking to his kid in a *voice like this*—

(baby voice) "Who's my little potato? You are! You are!"

GIRL *(mid-bite)*

I hate potatoes.

MAN

Yeah well, I hate society.

So gas station burritos it is.

They chew.

In peace.

One moth fries itself on the overhead light.

A child screams in the distance.

Neither flinches.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT – NIGHT

A **family of four** exits the diner.
Cliché in khakis. Dad holds leftovers. Mom holds expectations.
Kids whining. Something sticky. Probably syrup-based.

The **UPS truck** pulls up beside the curb.
Passenger window down.

MAN *(quietly, to girl)*
Drive a little closer to the curb, please.

GIRL
Closer?

MAN
Closer...

GIRL
...closer?

MAN
Clooooooseeer.

IN ONE FLUID MOTION
He **leans out** with the **knife**—
Runs a **perfect horizontal line** through the faces of the adults.
A soft *shhrrrk* as the blade **slices through cheeks**, exposing molars, gumline, horror.

The kids scream.
Meat flaps. Eyebrows twitch.
Dad drops the leftovers.

The truck **drives off smoothly**.

Inside—

GIRL *(grinning)*
Dude.
You're a fucking genius.
How do you *think* of them?

MAN *(wiping blade with a receipt)*
I don't.
Ideas just *pop* in.

GIRL *(nodding like a stoned professor)*
What is genius?

MAN *(mock-stern)*
Please, do enlighten me.

GIRL
Imagination.
Intuition.
Eye for detail.
And speed of execution.

MAN *(genuinely impressed)*
You just defined murder as an art movement.

GIRL
Banksy would be proud.

They fist bump over a mutilated napkin.
The truck vanishes into the dark.

OMNISCIENT NARRATOR (V.O.)
Let us pause for mere accounting.

Thus far, our charming duo—one alcoholic bard with a penchant for knives, and one precocious nihilist who rolls cigarettes like she's embalming the 20th century—have racked up the following infractions:

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY — CATEGORIZED & TALLY'D

HOMICIDE (various flavors)

- Cop shotgun'd in face: **1**
- Gang member collateral (ambiguous): **0.5**
- Waitress femoral-sliced: **1**
- Priest throat-cut in confessional: **1**
- Diner fire victims (approx.): **3**
- Wife corpse gift-swap: **1**
- Additional hotel massacre: **6**

- Misc. roadside creative murders: **2**
- “Face slicing” curbside art piece: **2 facial maimings, pending fatality**

🔪 **Subtotal: 15.5**

ARSON

- Diner greasefire: **1**
- Church immolation: **1**
- Funeral firebombing: **1**
- COVID sanitizer fireball (bonus artistic merit): **1**

🔥 **Subtotal: 4**

THEFT

- Alcohol (various): **4 bottles**
- Coffee: **1**

- Ambulance: **1**
- UPS truck: **1**
- Hotel rooms via mass murder: **2**
- Grant-eligible finger(s): **TBD**

💰 **Subtotal: 10-ish, depending on whether you count funeral hors d'oeuvres**

CHILD ENDANGERMENT / CORRUPTION OF MINOR

- Giving alcohol to 11-year-old: **yes**
- Teaching knife technique via live demonstration: **absolutely**
- Encouraging vehicular homicide: **100%**
- Driving unsupervised: **constantly**
- Being role model: **existential crime**

👶 **Subtotal: ongoing**

MISC.

- Quoting Joan Baez to a child under duress: **1 emotional felony**
- Threatening spiritual healers with eye contact: **probable**
- Public indecency (moon incident): **1**

TOTAL KNOWN CRIMES (CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE): 30+
Not counting metaphysical infractions, aesthetic violations, or crimes against narrative structure.

OMNISCIENT NARRATOR (V.O.)
Let us continue now, into the bright nihilism of the American landscape, where the bodies cool faster than the microwaved burritos.

OMNISCIENT NARRATOR (V.O.)
Pause, if you will, for a bureaucratic detour.

INT. DIMLY LIT STUDY – NIGHT

A dusty rotary phone on a stack of Kafka novels rings.
The **omniscient narrator**, dressed like a Victorian tax auditor, picks it up and dials with the solemnity of summoning death itself.

NARRATOR
Martin? Yeah, hey. Listen, I just sent you an email—subject line "hypothetical felony spree involving knives, minors, and gas station cuisine."

(Pause)

Oh, you're looking at it already. Perfect.

So—I'm writing a new book. Two protagonists. One: a middle-aged man who thinks Joan Baez

lyrics are character development.
Two: a girl. Eleven. No, dude. *Gross*. Not like that.
She's just… along.

(Pause. Frown.)

Yes. That's the body count. Yes. That many arsons.
No, not over months. *Thirty-six hours.*

(Pause. Deepening frown.)

Yes, I'm serious. That's the plot.

(Pause.)

No, they're not part of a terrorist cell. No manifesto.
Unless TikTok counts.

(Pause. Long sigh.)

Right. You'll email me the breakdown?
Great. I'll wait.

INT. COMPUTER SCREEN – FBI EMAIL – FIVE MINUTES LATER

Subject: RE: Hypothetical spree – FBI Response

Perpetrator 1: Adult male

- **Charged with:** 1st-degree murder (x12+), attempted murder, arson (x4), grand theft auto (x2), child endangerment, assault with a deadly weapon, unlawful transport of a minor across state lines, abuse of funeral property (yes that's a thing), terrorism-level multiple homicide coordination.
- **Sentencing estimate:**

  12 consecutive life sentences + 3 death penalties + a Netflix true

crime docu-series with moody cello music.

Perpetrator 2: Minor, female, age 11

- Charged with: accomplice to multiple felonies, but due to age, will likely be classified under juvenile delinquency, psychological unfitness, and will be tried in a closed court.
- Outcome:

  Likely lifelong institutionalization in a psychiatric facility, then a memoir by age 19 and a cult following by 25.

FBI Classification:
"Situation escalated beyond standard protocol. Referred to as Code: Bonnie & Psyclown."

OMNISCIENT NARRATOR (V.O.)
Back to the phone. The narrator, furrowed brow, tie loosened like a man losing faith in both fiction and the federal government.

INT. LAMPSHADE-LIT ROOM – NIGHT CONTINUES

He dials again.
Cracks a knuckle. Then another. Then three more for dramatic rhythm.

NARRATOR
Marty.
Yeah, me again.

(Pause)
Oh, is that Sally yelling in the background?

Tell her I'll sodomize myself with a fire hydrant later, as she so charmingly suggests.

Now listen, buttercup, I don't need the list of charges.
Forget the court angle. I want boots-on-the-ground reality.

The **reaction**.
Cops, Feds, National Guard, *Oprah*, I don't care.

Two perps.
Male adult. Girl, eleven.
Yes, *that* list of actions.
No, not over a month.
Thirty-six hours.
Yes, **with time for burritos**.

(Pause. Click of a Zippo. Exhale.)

Oh don't give me that *"it's the middle of the night"* crap.
I wrote your **PhD dissertation** while high on

absinthe and Sartre, and you *know it*.
You owe. **Big.**

INT. EMAIL – FBI RESPONSE (TOP SECRET/PROBABLY DRUNK)

Subject: **Re: Realistic Agency Reaction — Spree Timeline: 36h**

Estimated Federal/Local Response (U.S. jurisdiction):

HOURS 0–4

- Dismissed as unrelated incidents.
- Cops blaming teenagers. Or Satan. Or both.
- Local news reports "random violence" and blames TikTok challenge.

HOURS 5–10

- Homicide detectives start connecting dots.
- First BOLO (Be On Lookout) issued—bad sketch. Looks vaguely like Charles Manson fucked a scarecrow.
- Amber Alert triggered due to girl's age.

HOURS 10–15

- FBI enters chat.
- Task force formed.
- Media blackout attempted. Fails.
- Cable news spins it as Antifa meets cult cosplay meets AI uprising.

HOURS 15–24

- Behavioral Analysis Unit builds psychological profile.
- Helicopters up. Roadblocks.
- The pair are **spotted**. Chase begins.
- They escape. Why? Because UPS trucks don't scream "criminal minds."

HOURS 25–30

- NSA phones tapped.
- Drone deployed.
- White House receives "Presidential Daily Briefing" titled:
  "Tiny Psycho & Her Knife Dad: Midwest Mayhem Timeline."

HOURS 30–36

- Full mobilization.
- Multi-state manhunt.

- Waco-level response being considered.
- Someone in Langley pitches Netflix rights.

PROBABLE OUTCOME:

- High-speed showdown.
- 37 patrol cars, 2 tanks, 3 helicopters.
- Ends in gunfire or surprise surrender at a Denny's.
- Girl writes memoir.
- Man becomes true crime podcast icon, played by Jeremy Renner.

OMNISCIENT NARRATOR (V.O.)
Thank you, Marty. Kiss Sally's megaphone for me.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY – DAY

The **UPS truck** rumbles toward a **roadblock**.
Orange cones. Four squad cars. Two cops in mirrored sunglasses with the intellectual wattage of lukewarm Gatorade.

The truck slows.
Idles.
Window rolls down.

COP 1 *(peering in)*
UPS truck.
Blood stains.
Shotgun on the dash.
They meet the description.

COP 2 *(still eating beef jerky)*
No they don't.

COP 1
What?
They match the BOLO. From the CCTV footage.

COP 2
Dude, learn to *read*.
Description says: *"male subject dominating, keeping child under duress, kid terrorized, possibly drugged. Needs psychiatric protection."*

(Looks into truck)

Look at her.
She's driving.
She's got aviators.
She's chewing gum like a mob boss in an 80s porno.
And he looks like her *hostage*.

COP 1 *(squints)*
In effect... yeah.
He does look like he's just trying to survive.

(The **girl waves** like a queen. Man gives a thumbs-up, eyes hollow.)

COP 2

Move along, folks.

Drive safely, *Miss*.

GIRL

Thank you, officer. Love your mustache.

MAN *(deadpan)*

Hope your Kevlar fits your ego.

They pull away.

Behind them—

COP 1

You sure that wasn't them?

COP 2

Not our circus, not our felony-ridden clown act.

COP 1 *(shrugs)*

Wanna go get a Slurpee?

COP 2
Thought you'd never ask.

INT. TRUCK – CONTINUOUS

GIRL
See? You keep saying we're wanted, but I'm a minor and you look like the problem.

MAN *(grumbling)*
I am the problem.

GIRL
You're *my* problem.

MAN
You're welcome.

She hits the gas.
Sun beats down.
Somewhere behind, the law quietly collapses under its own laziness.

EXT. OMNISCIENT NARRATOR'S COTTAGE – TWILIGHT

Chimney puffing soft existential dread.
Books piled like fortresses around the windows.
Record player spinning *Bach's Toccata and Fugue*… in reverse.

Then—

Tires crunch gravel.

Twelve black SUVs glide up the drive in synchronized formation.
A ballet of bureaucratic dread.

Doors open.
Men in suits. Sunglasses at dusk. Earpieces glowing with vague menace.
One carries a briefcase. Another carries an axe. One just breathes heavily—his only skill.

KNOCK KNOCK.

The **omniscient narrator** opens the door halfway.
Still wearing slippers.
Mug reads: “God, But With Footnotes.”

LEAD SUIT
Sir.
We just want to talk.

NARRATOR
That's what Nixon said to the mirror.

LEAD SUIT
This isn't about politics.
It's about your… *protagonists*.

NARRATOR *(sips tea)*
You mean the charming knife-savant and the eleven-year-old agent of entropy?

SUIT 2
Sir, we’ve traced 41 felonies, 8 stolen vehicles, and what appears to be a coordinated campaign against diners, clergymen, and waffle integrity.

SUIT 3 *(holding binder)*
And someone sent us a PDF labeled
"crimes_so_far_lol.pdf"

NARRATOR
Ah. Yes. I believe that was page 73 of my manuscript. It's a haiku about arson.

LEAD SUIT
You do realize your *"fiction"* is starting to **bleed into real-world surveillance patterns**, right?

NARRATOR
Gentlemen, if I had that kind of influence, the pope would be a jazz saxophonist and Shakespeare would ghostwrite TikToks.

SUIT 4 *(whispering)*
Sir… just blink twice if the girl is with you.

NARRATOR *(laughs)*
You think I'd bring *her* into my house?
I own vintage furniture.

A long silence.
Wind howls.
The **suits confer telepathically**.

LEAD SUIT
We're watching you, sir.

NARRATOR
You're watching everyone.
That's why no one's watching themselves anymore.

They retreat.
SUVs vanish like a government-funded mirage.

Narrator closes door, locks thirteen locks, and mutters:

NARRATOR
And *that*, children, is why omniscient narrators write under pen names.

EXT. FLORIDA KEYS HIGHWAY – SUNSET

The **UPS truck** barrels down the Overseas Highway. On both sides: shimmering Atlantic, flamingo-colored sky, regret.

MAN *(lounging with one boot on the dash)*
Kiddo…
You do realize we drove past Reno a dozen states ago, right?

GIRL *(chewing beef jerky like a philosopher)*
What?

MAN *(points around dramatically)*
See that blue stuff?
Left? Right? Ahead? *Beneath?*

That's not *dry Nevada soil*, sweetheart.
That's the **Atlantic Ocean**.
We're on the *Florida Keys Highway*.

GIRL *(looks around for the first time in hours)*
…Huh.

MAN

You drove past a Waffle House shaped like a cowboy hat, a giant ball of yarn, *and* the world's largest rocking chair.
No Reno signs.
Just gators, swamps, and retirement condos that smell like menthol and death.

GIRL *(shrugs)*

This looked suspiciously better than Nevada.

MAN

Only thing suspicious here is how we haven't been arrested yet.

GIRL

We're too weird to process.

MAN *(nods solemnly)*

Like shrimp on pizza. Or heterosexual priests.

GIRL

You wanna turn around?

MAN
Nah. Might as well see how far this road floats before America runs out.

They drive on.
Past sunburnt pelicans.
Into the last gasps of daylight.
Somewhere ahead, an old man sells mojitos from a kayak.
Somewhere behind, the *law gives up and retires in Tampa.*

EXT. FIRST KEY ISLAND – OFF-RAMP DIRT ROAD – DUSK

MAN *(pointing forward like he's on a safari)*
In Key West, there's this famous bar—Sloppy Joe's—where **Ernest Hemingway** used to drink, brawl, and—

GIRL *(dead-eyed, reaching for the blinker)*
Turning signal on.

She slows.
Turns.
Gets off the bridge.
Takes the off-road exit like a **resigned postal worker in a hurricane**.

She parks. Leaves the engine running.
Takes her **knife**, and the **pickle jar** with her **pinky finger** still floating proudly inside like a pickled crime trophy.

GIRL *(stepping out without looking back)*
I'll **slaughter** my own way to a hotel room, thank you very much.

I'm *done* here.

No more lectures.
No more dead white guys with beards and testosterone problems.
No more cigars, no more sepia memories, no more "once upon a saloon."

You can **kiss my little white—**

MAN *(hands in ears, spinning in a circle)*
BLALALALALALALALALALALALAAAAAHHH HHHHHHHH!!!

He twirls like a drunken wind chime in a tornado. A man who's dodged bullets, fire, God, and meaning—but not **a girl's limit**.

GIRL *(shouting back)*
If I see *one* more beard, I'm shaving you in your sleep!

MAN
THERE'S A MUSEUM!
WITH A TYPEWRITER!

GIRL
AND I'M GONNA USE IT TO FILE A RESTRAINING ORDER AGAINST CULTURAL HERITAGE!

She stomps into the jungle.
The knife gleams.
The jar sloshes.

The UPS truck quietly farts smoke behind them.

Somewhere ahead: a **hotel with lax security**, and probably a **parrot concierge**.

And maybe—just maybe—one **last** crime before room service.

EXT. TROPICAL MOTEL – NIGHT

Palm trees sway like they've seen things.
The neon sign flickers a single, half-lit **"MOT"** — the **"EL"** gave up during the last hurricane or homicide.

The parking lot is **deserted**. Not a sound but the buzz of suicidal mosquitoes.

GIRL creeps toward the two **lit rooms**, her knife casually dangling, jar in hand, pinky bobbing like a bored ghost.

She peeks into the **first window**—
A **stack of bodies**, slumped like laundry day in hell.

Then—

HIM, reclining against the mini-fridge, sipping from a tiny rum bottle.

MAN
Okay, okay…
I'm sorry.

I **mansplained**.
I **gaslighted** a bit.
Didn't I?

GIRL *(arms crossed like a pissed-off CEO)*
You figure?

MAN *(spreading arms with pathetic optimism)*
Look, truce.
You sleep with the corpses tonight.
I'll take the quiet room with the Bible and the broken AC.

GIRL *(deadpan)*
Hard due.

(She drops the pickle jar with a **"plonk"** on the bedside table, opens the covers, and kicks a leg off a cadaver to make room.)

MAN *(from the other room, yelling through the wall)*
Want me to put some white noise on?

GIRL
Already got it.
It's the sound of **your guilt**.

MAN
I miss when you couldn't reach the pedals.

GIRL
I miss when you still thought Reno was a destination.

She turns off the light.
Curls up beside a corpse like a sociopathic Goldilocks.

EXT. MOTEL – SAME

Crickets chirp.
One of the corpses groans slightly.
Maybe gas. Maybe not.

All is calm.

INT. MOTEL – 2:00 A.M. – NIGHT

The **humid silence** of the Keys. One ceiling fan turns like it's interrogating itself.
Then—

CREAK.

Both doors open at once, in sync like tragic comedy.

MAN *(grumbling, shirtless, holding a plastic cup)*
Insomnia?

GIRL *(dragging a corpse arm off her shoulder)*
Insomnia.

MAN
Sucks, eh?

GIRL
Sucks *shit*.

MAN *(raises cup)*
Wanna drink and pass out?

GIRL *(already holding a rum bottle stolen from minibar)*
I thought you'd never ask.

MAN *(eyeing her with fake concern)*
You're way below drinking age, by the way.

GIRL *(without blinking)*
I'm also below age for—

MAN *(fingers in ears, dancing like a lunatic)*
BLLLAHAHAHAHLALAHAHAHAAHHAAAA!!! NOT LISTENING NOT LISTENING, BRING ON THE APOCALYPSE, JUST NOT THAT CONVERSATION

They clink mismatched plastic cups.
She sips.
He gulps.

They sit together on a cracked pool chair, staring at the nothing.

GIRL
You ever think we're just fictional?

MAN
Every time you talk like a screenwriter on ketamine.

GIRL *(nods)*
Good. Let's make sure the author can't sleep either.

They drink in silence.
Somewhere, a rooster screams.
They both flip it off instinctively.

EXT. MOTEL COURTYARD – 3:12 A.M. – UNDER A DYING PALM TREE

They're still seated in their cracked pool chairs.
One of the corpses in the next room coughs.
Probably post-mortem gas.

GIRL *(absently swirling rum in a coffee cup)*
Ever seen *Kirikou and the Sorceress*?

MAN *(eyebrow up)*
You're getting me here, kiddo.
No—what is it?

GIRL
It's this animated African film.
About a cruel witch terrorizing a village, but turns

out she's not cruel—just in pain.
So little Kirikou, this tiny kid, helps her. He cures her pain.
And she becomes good again.

MAN *(genuinely intrigued)*
Ok… so it's like… redemption?

GIRL
Wait. Then, as a reward, she turns him adult.
Tall. Muscular.
Like boom, full-grown.

MAN
Hmm.

GIRL
So they can—

MAN *(fingers violently jammed in ears, screaming into the void)*
BLLALAHAHALALLALALA NOPE NOPE I'M

CALLING CHILD SERVICES ON GOD HIMSELF

GIRL *(smirking)*
Just saying. That movie's rated E for everyone.

MAN *(muttering, rocking back and forth)*
You need a responsible adult. Like, now. A nun. A retired librarian. Someone who bakes casseroles.

GIRL
Too late. You got me.
Now drink up, Hemingway. We're going to rob a fish market at sunrise.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT – 4:03 A.M. – PRE-DAWN MUGGINESS

They're still out there.
One plastic chair has collapsed. The other is leaning.
Two drunks in the after-hours of morality.

GIRL *(arms crossed, still poking the conversation like a raccoon with a trash bag)*
Dude, I'm just saying.

MAN *(rubbing temples, eyes like two bullet holes in a paperback)*
Do you know Jorge Luis Borges' *Garden of Forking Paths*?

GIRL *(backing up with palms raised)*
Okay, okay—
No need to bring out the frickin' artillery.

MAN *(intense, waving finger like it's casting a spell)*
Infinite choices.
Infinite narratives.
Each path we take splits reality like an overcooked sausage.

GIRL *(sarcastic)*
Deep, professor. But if I say "Kirikou" again, do we

enter another fork where you don't scream like a war crime?

MAN
We enter a reality where I throw myself under a zamboni to avoid the plotline.

GIRL
You and your literary trauma. You're one mention of Rimbaud away from combusting.

MAN *(takes sip, stares into cup)*
I once taught French Symbolism to undergrads. I've seen what madness lives behind wide eyes and flip-flops.

GIRL
You keep bringing books to a flamethrower fight.

SILENCE.

A rooster *burps*.
A car backfires three towns away.
The sun hesitates on the horizon like it's not sure the world deserves light today.

INT. OMNISCIENT NARRATOR'S OFFICE – NIGHT – A ROOM THAT SHOULDN'T EXIST

Stacks of manuscripts. Ashtrays full of metaphor.
Phone ringing like a metronome with anxiety.

RING.

NARRATOR *(picks up)*
Yeah?

MARTIN (FBI) *(on speaker, chewing something wet)*
It's getting biblical.
Do you realize how many *cross-jurisdictional violations* you've written in?

NARRATOR
Buddy, I invented jurisdictions. What do you want?

MARTIN
Call the wife.
She might be the only anchor left.

NARRATOR *(muttering)*
Oh, great. *Summoning* the domestic nuke…

INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN – NIGHT – WIFE'S HOUSE

Phone rings. She picks up with a martini already half-gone.

WIFE
If this is about the bodies again, I told you—he's got the truck.

NARRATOR *(voice echoing like a Greek god on espresso)*
Bring him in.
Bring the girl, too.

WIFE *(sips, eyes narrow)*
Fine.
But I'm not washing that pinky jar.

INT. UPS TRUCK – NIGHT – MAN DRIVING, GIRL EATING A BANANA WITH A SWITCHBLADE

PHONE RINGS.

MAN
Yello?

WIFE (V.O.)
Bring the kiddo too.

MAN *(sighs deeply)*
You want me to wrap her in a bow or let her carry the shotgun?

RING.

MAN'S OTHER PHONE (Yes, he has two. Don't ask.)

WOODY ALLEN
It'll be fun.

MAN *(dead-eyed)*
Define "fun."

WOODY ALLEN
Existential Jewish guilt and jazz clarinet solos.

MAN
So… *torture*.

RING.

WIFE'S PHONE AGAIN.

MIA FARROW
You called this on yourself, gal.

WIFE *(lighting a cigarette with a church candle)*
I *know*.

RING.

GIRL'S PHONE (Yes, also. Just roll with it.)

SOON-YI PREVIN
Your life's solved now, girl.

GIRL *(eyebrows climbing her forehead)*
That's either a prophecy…
or a **threat**.

SOON-YI
Yes.

NARRATOR *(now narrating from a moving carousel in the fourth dimension)*
And so the calls came.

From beyond fiction.
From beneath ethics.
From atop an unpaid therapy bill.

The chessboard was set.
The clock was ticking.
And everyone, somehow, was calling collect.

FADE OUT.

The world keeps spinning.
Corpses rot.
Laws unravel.
Bananas get sliced with switchblades.
And somewhere, Woody Allen plays a clarinet solo over a flaming fish market.

THE END

Meet a man with nothing left to lose but his spinal integrity and a girl too smart, too young, and far too armed. Together, they carve a flaming path through suburbia with a folding knife, an existential crisis, and a bottle of Long Island Iced Tea stolen from a six-year-old's funeral.

ABSIT INIURIA VERBIS is a gospel of the unredeemable—a cinematic descent into polite violence, blasphemous companionship, and waffle-induced murder. Churches burn, fingers drop, sirens wail, and no one—not the cops, not the priest, not even poor Dakota—walks out intact.

This is not a redemption story. This is not a cautionary tale. This is what happens when Albert Camus, Bugs Bunny, and Charles Manson form a jazz trio and go on tour.

Alba Pratalia writes with the rhythm of a funeral dirge set to slapstick, the vocabulary of a philosophy graduate with a criminal record, and the elegance of a molotov cocktail lobbed through a stained-glass window.

Burn your Bibles. Unfasten your seatbelts.

And remember:

"You never know when you'll need to open a priest again."

WARNING: Contains graphic violence, philosophical despair, underage sarcasm, arson, a dead clown, and a complete lack of moral resolution.

You were warned. Now turn the page